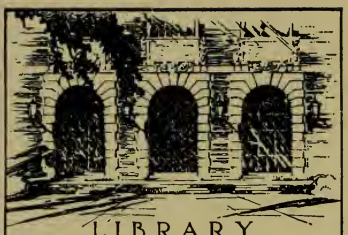

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THE

MOUNTAIN DECAMERON.

VOL. I.

J. B. NICHOLS AND SON, 25, PARLIAMENT STREET.

THE

MOUNTAIN

DECAMERON.

BY JOSEPH DOWNES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.

1836.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THOMAS FRANKLAND LEWIS,

OF HARPTON COURT, RADNORSHIRE.

Sir,

In the case of a celebrated author dedicating a work to a distinguished character, some reciprocity of favour may be deemed to exist; but an obscure one must limit his humbler aim to the hope of not dishonouring a patron by any flagrant defect in his offering. In such predicament stands the individual who now avails himself of your permission to inscribe with your name The Mountain Decameron. He is conscious of labouring under a sort of double obscurity: not only as a man unknown, but belonging to a country (wonderful to say!) almost equally unknown, in a wide sense of

that word, although the most beautiful province of the United Kingdom—the one most identified with its old romantic history—the theatre of a triumphant resistance to successive invaders, through upwards of seven hundred years.

Why Wales, with all its celebrity as a land of landscapes, enjoys none whatever in any other point of view—why it exhibits a total blank in British literature—why a region which the hand of nature has stamped with an imperishable beauty,—and decay itself has contributed to adorn, and still further adapt to the highest purpose of imaginative art, even as a theatre for the Tragic Muse herself, with her "gorgeous pall,"—should so long be neglected by dramatist and novelist, when Ireland and Scotland have been familiarised to the English reading public, by the highest genius,—these are questions not to be discussed here, however curious and remarkable.

Too correct in his self-estimation to emulate the genius of a Scott or an Edgeworth, the writer of this tribute to the attractions of this sublime region of ruins, rocks, and floods, is also too proud to imitate the outer

form under which that genius has been developed. This is therefore no addition to that somewhat hackneyed species, the "National Novel." All that he pretends to, is to present certain portraitures of passions, such as in the hands of a *real* master — a tragic "spirit of the age," (should such long-looked-for hero ever appear) might become not unworthy of so sublime and solemn a stage for their enactment, as he has long considered the mountain solitudes of your native country, which to his (perhaps wild) fancy, seem almost to stand waiting for such exhibition, in their monastic solemnity and tragic associations with a fallen throne, and wild and dark legendary as well as national history.

Should such commingling of literary romance, with its natural romantic charms, tend in the least degree to draw more public attention to *all* the features of this neglected Sister Province of England, you will perhaps not deem this book wholly unworthy of your patronage; the lively interest you always felt in the welfare of the Principality, not having merged in that wider sphere of solicitude, to which your talents and integrity have caused

you to be summoned. The epithet of "Friends of the People" has been perverted into one of odious secret import; the very reverse of it is ostensible; but that of "Friends of the Poor" was one which the Incas of Peru (as the histories of that country prove) coveted beyond all other more high-sounding titles attached to their supremacy.

That your power to lessen the sufferings of a great class of your fellow-creatures—the Destitute—in some measure committed to your care, may prove commensurate with your will, so as ultimately to establish your claim to that enviable title, which even Sovereignty wisely aspired to merit, is the very sincere wish of,

Sir,

your most obedient and

obliged servant,

JOSEPH DOWNES.

Builth,
Brecknockshire,
April 10, 1836.

PREFACE,

WITH SOME REMARKS ON OUR PRESENT IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE.

THE "*vox populi*," having pronounced a Preface an impertinence, imposes on a *bashful* author a double task; for, inasmuch as he cannot take courage to appear without something in the shape of a prefatory apology, this intolerance of prefaces seems to require that he shall begin by apologising for his apology. Doubtless, there is something of gallant bearing, an indication of vast merit, in the rushing of a literary new-comer into the arena, in the naked strength and self-confidence of authorship, as who should say 'Here I am!' Self-sufficiency is more promising than that old-fashioned modesty, which came cringing with deprecatory addresses. But "*tempora mutantur*," and the spirit of prefaces is changed with them. For, whereas such addresses were designed to excuse the vanity of so mighty an ambition as that for literary fame, such as fame

was—our modern preface-writer may quite as reasonably labour therein to disclaim the puerility of an ambition so poor as that which can covet literary fame—such as it now *is* in England,—the "*nominis umbra*,"—the shadow of the true, the "immortal"—and nothing more.

On the ground, then, of possibly saving trouble to the persons who may take up this book with a view to reading it, this preface is *obtruded* on them to serve the same purpose as does a bill of fare before a more substantial species of entertainment.

First, to the gentlemen of Wales the author deems it best, at once, to *confess* that this "Mountain-Decameron" does not relate exclusively to the Welsh, the whole Welsh, and nothing but the Welsh. He presumes to hope, nevertheless, that such gentlemen will not throw it down again in disappointment, but deign to share what amusement it may afford, even with the Saxon "foreigner."

Its design embraces the great "many-coloured life," not life in Wales only—the passions of men, not of Welshmen only—the beauty of Scenery in general, though chiefly that of their fine and neglected country; and this because, in the opinion of those who have travelled far

in many lands, and with an eye and mind for Nature, that country is not excelled in pictorial beauty by even the finest scenes such extensive travel has presented to their view.*

The author will avow further, that it dares to deal with greatness generally—the moral and the pictorial,—whether in the outer world or that inner microcosm, the heart of man,—whether for the eye, or the eye of the mind,—whether for good or for evil. Moreover, Wales is, most strange to say, very nearly unbroken ground in English literature—quite such in the romantic department. Yet who, alive to taste or feeling, can look without some impulse toward the tragic—some touch of romantic melancholy—on its lone cataracts, its cloud-capt rocks—its vestiges of departed greatness—its mighty wrecks of castles breasting stormy seas—of abbeys, crumbling in the olive-coloured glooms of russet heights and leafy umbrage,—its *Carneddan*, its ruins, and its tombs? † or who roam vacant through the

* The late Bishop Heber, somewhere in his Correspondence, gives the preference to Wales, above all the countries which his fine taste or religious zeal tempted him to explore: for "pastoral beauty and the softer species of the sublime in landscape," it remained unrivalled.

† With a thousand apologies to the *higher orders* of Welsh,

summer valleys, with the river-blue, and cottage-white intermingled,—with the universal green colour of the very air among so many pastoral mountains, joined to such poetical modes of life, without something of lyrical inspiration under such lingering reflections of a golden age? The common nomenclature of its topography involves both poetry and his-

it must be owned that this *can* the modern *gentleman* of Wales! The ruins that peep on his path, the dark hints of past tragic events, that, even in the common names of places, his familiar haunts, in the business of hunting and shooting, "implore the passing tribute of a sigh"—implore it in vain! The lightest, most tasteful antiquarianism, is heavy and vapid midst the excitement of the chase, or other excitements more fatal to health.

There is in fact, and literally, *no Reading Public in Wales*, but the better educated part of the more secluded Welsh peasantry. The gentry of Wales dispute this, but they had better *disprove* it. Let them do so by attaching *some* importance to so invaluable a resource, one so innocent, so exalting, so vital to good morals as *reading*. Vermin hunting might still be the *grand* resource.

Facts are stubborn things. *Seventeen* Welsh periodicals circulate *well* among the *humbler* classes! *One*, conducted with ability—and with great sacrifice by the spirited patrons of it, to the honour of their country—*one* acknowledged as worthy of support, by high critical authorities *not* Welsh—has at last *ceased to circulate for want of that support* from the *gentry*. Other orders, *seventeen*—the gentry *not one: verbum sat.*

torical romance, and often deep tragedy, like the solemn conjectural whisperings from almost fabulous times to ours, in the half-effaced, hardly deciphered, hieroglyphical memorials on an age-worn tomb, or coffin-stone of Egypt. There is the *Fynnon Waedog* ("Bloody Well")—the *Pant y Gwaye* (the "Hollow of Woe")—the *Maen Achwynfan* (the "Stone of Lamentation and Weeping")—the *Llysan Gwaed Gwyr* (the "Plant of the Blood of Man"). What a terrible mystery of some dark actual tragedy of life, now buried under pleasant daisied fields, and mountain banks now echoing only bleatings and lowings, do these more than half unveil—and by a single name!

All these characteristics seemed to the author to give to North and South Wales great attractions, as a solemn, a beautiful, and a *new* stage, for the enactment of "high actions"—that is, actions *rendered high by height of passion*—"every new-sprung turn" of which is (according to Dryden, writing of dramatic poetry)—"an *action* in itself"—in which a peasant or sheep-breeder (even a modern and a Welsh one) may certainly figure as proudly or even fearfully as a prince: vehement emotion, and the higher tragical passions being of no age, rank, or

country, but equally sublime in their features, under whatever costume or station.

The author is not "rushing in" to tread this high ground to which the modern Muses so rarely aspire, in sheer simplicity, or in ignorance that it is one dangerous to tread, and (reputed) difficult to reach.

Let the reader be prepared with his smile for the vanity or insanity of authorship—the writer is at least prepared for it. But he prefers the possible fall to the inevitable prostration of wilfully crawling in a crowd, in such proneness, as the "mob of honourable men," who now engross the honours of a short-lived popularity, seem content to adopt, to keep each other in countenance; holding each another's skirt, while they *creep* up the steps of a Temple of Fame—of *their own*.

The "vile iteration" of poetry, of novel, of romance, of imaginative efforts of so many kinds, that do not even appeal to one lofty emotion, do not lay the hand on the ever-waiting lyre of the heart of man, must be wearying to thousands as well as to the writer of this. Why, then, not break away from such a beaten *track*, where to follow is certain failure? He would rather have those authors' laughter, if he leap only to

fall, than their praise for walking *equo passu*, by their side—he would rather continue as one buried alive in the grave of utter neglect, than share their triumph, and ascend his own little triumphal car of gingerbread gold with the best of them—even were it possible for his voice, doubly overwhelmed by their noise of careering over his head, and the heaviness of friendless obscurity (and perhaps other heaviness) on his breast, to reach the ear of the world—he would "rather be a kitten, and cry mew," than swell the common cry of *those*—than "strut his hour" as *such* a hero of bibliopolical glory.

To paint the human heart in storm—(a moral spectacle as grand and elevating to the soul as that of a stormy ocean)—to relieve its terrors and its gloom, by the gentler touches of woman's tenderness—of the thousand sweetnesses of childhood,—of love, pity, the generosity of self-devotion—such great, such delightful exercise of human sensibilities—is the *endeavour*, at least, of this Mountain-Decameron. Of the attempt the author will never be ashamed, however this Age of Utility may,—like the "world" to Goldsmith's young writer's paradoxes—"say *nothing*" to the attempt.

Further, the writer will avow his persuasion,

that to soar into the region of the stormy passions is only difficult, from modern writers being ashamed—or too book-learned, and too worldly wise, too cunning in the craft of getting-up a pretty book *to sell*—to write from their own hearts, from nature only; not, of course, excluding all aids from education, which may give grace to their wings when flying; but '*imping*' that wing with none but the feathers of the eagle, and winging their way no lower than that proud bird stoops to haunt, which hangs poised, now over green sunshiny dales of sheepfolds, in the stillest blue of noon, and, presently, is up in the black storms, or tearing its bleeding prey, with screams of wild unity with its 'pride of place,' perched on the ruins of the thunder-splintered towers of some Norwegian rock washed by a shipwrecking sea.

This persuasion overpowers, in his *own* mind, the author's selfwarning whisper of boldness or absurdity in this indulgence of involuntary aspiration, for effort it is not. The more terrible and arousing the occasion, or the more melting and moving,—the more powerful, of course, the impression, voluptuous or grave. Now, if an author has but feeling, if those *impressions* are the real springs of his dramatic movements, is not the very force of the blow

struck, or the very sweetness of the touch, the greatest aid to his progress? And if he will utterly renounce obedience to his inward impulse—regard only what is going on among those he is about to address, that run about asking who was the last "immortal" poet of the season, *which* acted the "great" yesterday, and which is to be crowned to-day?—if he throws himself wholly on his own fevered imaginings of what it would be pretty and lady-pleasing to say, instead of waiting and listening retired in his own yet *green* heart, as in a bower for the *voice* of his *Egeria*, Natural Emotion—instead of attending to what Nature would say in the supposed situation—what marvel if he fail as utterly and ridiculously, as would a player, who, through eager attention to the idle buzz of his audience, will not listen to his prompter? A worthy audience he can charm only by knowing well his part, which part, only that prompter can supply. Were such "poor player," despising the Author's words, to attempt to palm his own cold fancies on the House, for the true language, would not such impostor be bolder than the player who should, however awkwardly, do his best to recover the true words of the drama? However imperfectly, the writer of these things will prefer trying to catch the voice of Nature

—the mighty prompter, to trusting himself, or the false prompter Fashion. Should the imagined crisis be one to set Nature weeping, or even raging in the sublime of despair and agony,—if the occasion do actually warrant,—he *will not be deterred by any squeamish prudery of reproof, or cold-blooded ridicule*, from meeting that occasion—well knowing that the modesty of *Nature* and the modesty of Fashion differ as much as the modest nakedness of a babe, and the exquisite dread of exposure lisped forth by a shameless prostitute;—that the former is "*never* to be overstepped"—the latter *continually*,—if Horace is to be admitted any authority, in the kind of achievements which alone distinguish the true Poet from the false. To arouse, to transport, to "storm the breast,"* which Johnson (even the frigid Johnson) recognizes as the highest glory of Shakespeare, is to be disgusting, or ridiculous, to modern pretended adorers of Shakespeare! †

* His powerful strokes presiding Truth imprest,
And unresisted Passion stormed the breast.—JOHNSON.

† It is a rather perplexing task to any writer, tremblingly approaching the most just tribunal of public taste in this year of grace 1836—to reconcile its varying canons. For example, madness is often pronounced something too awful to be the subject of imaginative pleasure (as if, by the way, midnight

A new writer presenting *poetical* prose to a public utterly nauseating poetry, may be allowed to say a few words on what is called the Decline of Poetry. This, and the Fall of

murder, the stealing of a husband to the bed of a wife who is to be smothered—as if, in short, the very staple of tragedy were not terrible as well as madness) yet standard works of Imagination, *not* of to-day—are full of such portraits, to say nothing of an Ophelia and a Lear, and they are not meddled with, having passed the ordeal. Is then an author to consider that to-day he is on forbidden ground, being not yet among the known, but should miraculous luck, to-morrow, lift him into day-light, what was yesterday forbidden, loathsome, revolting, is become fair field and lawful? The same inconsistency marks its verdicts on empassioned writing in general, where the only difference consists in the era or author, which cannot alter the fitness of a subject for the public eye.

In one of the Tales here collected, this fearful ground is ventured on. The part embracing this subject—it will be perceived by those to whom the terrible tale of Matthew Wald, published several years ago, is familiar,—was suggested by the reminiscences of that tremendous shadowy *hiatus*, or dusk chasm in Wald's life, which divides it into two portions, in that wild and singular *poetical* autobiography. An objection which the writer saw made to that work in some periodical, as "*over tragical*," as "*too full of harrowing situations*," &c. &c. first tempted him to its perusal; and is the point indeed on which this allusion to it is made—this being deemed by the critic a *defect*, which made the work *less* popular than others by the same author. Yet these previous situations are what alone give that fine and solemn effect, which every poetic reader must be sensible of, to the unlooked-for troubled and awful calm of the restored madman's Parthian glance, at that hideous battle fought in dark with his fate's crisis, which

the Tragic Drama, as simultaneous, he presumes must be considered also as arising from one cause, and both parts of one 'movement'—the March of Vandalism—the same which, corrupting her very tongue, and brutalizing Rome in her falling days, prepared the Mistress of the World for her fast approaching, new, miserable character—that of a slave to barbarians.

Much conjecturing has been hazarded to account for this state—much wonder expressed that no great tragic poet arises *now* as of old—that our poetry (distinct from the drama), whatever may be its descriptive merit, has no *passion;* description (its only excellence) being carried into this department also, our passions being merely *described* not *imitated.* Perhaps it were as reasonable to wonder in an empty worship place, why no priest appears, why no organ sounds, no service begins, when we see that there is no congregation—that those who should form it are forming a mob round some fanatical mountebank outside of the temple, in

struck the writer as something like the grand elemental poetry of such a fiery sunset as we often see bursting out of the west "on the very edge of Night," as the Welsh say. Without the tempestuous previous clouds of the *life's* day, as the natural day's, there could be no such spectacle.—The hints taken from that strangely mournful outbreak (excepting its *calm*) are here acknowledged.

the thronged street—that the ranter, or whatever he may be, is pouring such a flood of religious words and big—such furious fiery somethings 'signifying nothing,' (but so *like* the language of inspiration as to pass for it)—that they fancy themselves filled with religion, when really their ears only are ringing with blasphemous nonsense, in jargon echoing the mere sound of the voice of prophecy and the true divinity. May not this metaphor illustrate the world's expectation of some tragic poet to spring up to no audience, as well as the present delusions practised on public vitiated taste, by some mock priests of the Temple of the Muse, who fill the ear with mere verbiage, and the fancy with a few rootless flowers of poesy, instead of inviting the heart and mind to the stirring reality?

Is it strange that this long talked-of hero does not stand knocking at shut-up hearts, when we see the public rage for more coarse appeals to the grosser faculties?—that the "most thinking people" would rather laugh than cry—rather gape than listen—that an elephant disputes their plaudits with a Kean—that the example of this is set them by those of eminent stations—that the deadened moral appetite is gone beyond the power of a generous cordial

to restore, in its deadly *atony*, and rather needs *fire*, needs the combustibles of sedition and civil war to excite it now, than aliment to nourish? as indicative of utter depravation of morals as well as taste, this atony must be regarded as ill-omened to the best interests of civilized men. Let those who wish their "days to be long in the land which the Lord their God hath given them," not contemn those signs that mark its moral state, this contemptible (as some may deem) *spot* in the moral hemisphere, which yet may prove the brewing of whole hurricanes, however *as yet* but a spot.

The causes of revolution, not confined to taste, are in active operation. The callous selfishness of the *esprit de commerce* creeps cold about the very heart's-core of British society, and diffuses its blind ridicule of all the higher aspirations of all kinds not directly tending to the *ledger*. There is the utilitarian class, which would push their own argument *ad absurdum*, confuting themselves, till by abolishing *all* the graces and amenities of life, they would render life itself a hard slavery, therefore a useless gift of God—God who gave flowers as well as herbs to the world, and heart-strings to man, as well as sinews and bones. Next, see trade, philosophy, (or the cant of it,) each severally assist-

ing to turn against the philosophy of feeling, the popular laugh. The useless classes of *mere* fashion seize the pretext of this tide setting in against it, and sneer as wisely as the "fat and greasy citizen," or scheming utilitarian, against the uselessness of *poetry* in its many impulses and forms, merely to sanction their own heartless abandonment to poor and frivolous pursuits, or rather no pursuits. Again, the feculent lowest current of this great sea has its own arousing agents, (demagogues, and moral harlequins of all kinds,) that utterly prevent all calm, and all lucidness of intellect.

What is the world of Imagination to the sordid, the ever busy, the ever idle (the fribble of fashion,) the theory-mad, the faction-mad, or alas! the *hunger-mad?* A world wholly veiled from their eyes! or, if unveiled, neither tempting nor easily conceivable, in its elements of greatness, or its power of delighting. We may say it is no more than one of the worlds of the midnight heavens to grazing brutes, who dream not of their existence, except when forced upon their *senses*, by glittering in their very eyes; and when thus unveiled to them, as little conceive of their real attributes of grandeur and utility, shining cold as they do—(the mere *poetry* of the universe to *them*,) in fields of

uneatable blue, a strange-coloured grass, and on an unscaleable *hill!* A very poor affair that heaven, compared with the poorest field that they can both reach and feed in, and gambol round, and pollute!

Even to reason's eye, and real wisdom, the imaginative part of our existence, and all enthusiasm, all chivalric sentiment, have their grotesque side, their primâ facie absurdity. But is it *really* wise to overlook what lurks under this Quixotic mask, so easily removed? the glow of generosity—the diversion from self—the fine humanity which it keeps cherishing warm beneath, in the popular heart? Those worldly-wise men are traitors to the world's best interests, who encourage the laugh against all lofty enthusiasm, and join the "long pull, and the strong pull, and the pull altogether," to drag down *poetry* (using that word in its widest acceptation) "from heaven to earth," to the level of those grosser resources, which the brutes themselves almost divide with us—that there may no longer exist that mystic golden ladder between "earth and heaven," which one may venture to consider mingled Meditation and Emotion—that escape from things "earthy," which the best and greatest men of the best and greatest eras have loved to preserve—by

which Plato, and even more active sages, retained that fine and pure health of heart and mind, which confinement to worldly things, and the selfishness of city pursuits, would have destroyed. Why cannot Science and Utility keep the "tenor of their way" (a glorious way) without insisting on driving over the softer sciences of the heart? Why should the active and scientific sneer at such sort of beautiful verdant byeway to the serene region of philosophic melancholy or imagination, which even the demigods of the golden ages of Greece and Rome so highly venerated, even while striving "might and main" in the cause of legislation or a republic, as strenuously as Mr. Jeremy Bentham, or Mr. Joseph Hume?

Finally, in extenuation of what will perhaps be deemed presumptuous ambition thus announced, the writer begs it may be remembered, that he is pleading for no novelty in composition, which he conceits himself the inventor of, but merely a bonâ fide return to that honest, *heartfelt, fearless* tone of expression, which distinguished our glorious old dramatists—for a *little* indulgence to those flowers, even in prose, which Jeremy Taylor did not deem unworthy of even divinity, nor

Bacon disdain to strew, even copiously, over philosophy's rugged path.

What eulogiums are still justly bestowed on the inimitable prose of the former! Yet, were a writer to put forth to-day, prose half as profusely adorned with poetic fancies, would not the very panegyrists of the old fall foul of the *modern* page, as "prose run mad?" I verily believe it, and cannot perceive the consistency of such criticism. What has been published in imitation of the writers of the Elizabethan age, in the dramatic walk, breathes more of the obsolete mannerism, than the substantial genius of that period, according to the critics.

Resigning the auctorial pompous periphrasis of the third person I shall entreat, "beloved reader," your indulgence for much quaintness, perhaps obscurity, certainly much ignorance of the *outer* world at least, which I feel assured that you will discover in these pages. Doubtless, if I be as ignorant of the heart and human character, as I am of the world and the worldly character, my authorship will be a woful failure.

Something, I hope, is to be allowed for the self-delusions of an almost literal hermit. Shut up or wandering among mountains for these

many years past, conversing with few but the rudest people, I have not the advantage of literary or other refined society, to freshen my stagnating thoughts, or correct my erroneous ones; to tell me where those thoughts are not duly elicited, or where it were more graceful to suppress them. I am my own adviser and my own critic, my own "pensive public," and hence, perhaps, ought to be less-severely quizzed if I become, as in the previous lines—my "own trumpeter." Nor do mountains alone constitute my solitude, but the misfortune of antedating old age by the loss of friends. The splendid streets of your huge metropolis, with their immense throngs of people, are to some few bosom-aliens among them, more deeply solitary than mountain-avenues, with their multitude of trees and moving flocks. For myself, I can say that the mighty "hum" of those crowds no more disturbs me, who neither share in the chase of their many interests nor swell the cry, than does the constant roar of the cataracts of my home country. Nor do I state this without a latent conceit that possibly such a recluse, addressing such an audience as the "Reading Public," may be regarded as a curious kind of monster. In such solitude, it is natural for the unguided mind (especially if in

old time enthusiastic) both to hope and despond to excess. I have however reached that stage of "life's poor play" when a writer (and still more if he be a parent) has a darker fear than that of the critic "before his eyes"—Death.

The decline of life is a sort of Calabrian soil, ashy as well as tremulous, and success and failure alike lose their intense effect under that eternal looking-for. He can patiently await critical insult or injustice, who knows that few or none survive, of those for the sake of whose opinion such insult would have been distressing. A prouder issue of his literary adventure would perhaps not prove a happier one. Total failure is perhaps not so painful as the success that comes *too late;* when the hearts that hoped with us, and for us, so long in vain, are in the earth, and the bitter self-mocking "*cui bono?*"—rises involuntarily from the depth of the empty surviving heart, in the Solitary—even though crowned beyond that heart's hope—he feels that it is not *within*, that pride turns for gratification, the social mind for bliss.

To the dead, to the buried bosom-friend or wife, the crowned hero is still uncrowned, and the most popular poet still an obscure rhymer.

What he was when that companion left him lonely on the earth, he is still and must be for ever and ever.

Fortunate they who do not, in their latter days, live and die among strangers.

Much here said does, doubtless, seem to discountenance publishing at all. Yet curiosity is as strong a principle within us, as vanity; irresistible when conjoined with it. If it was praiseworthy in an antique Sage to satisfy this craving even in his last hour, raising his sapient head with all the weight of death thereon, to inquire the topic of his friends' whisperings together, perhaps it may be held excusable for one, the least of a sage possible, to ask, even at the eleventh hour, as idle a question, of the Critical World—"Am I a Poet?"

THE

MOUNTAIN-DECAMERON.

EPISTOLARY PROEM.

To Dr. Edward Hogg, London.

B——, Brecknockshire,
2d 7th Mo. 18—.

ESTEEMED FRIEND,

I RETURN to your fine, fertile, tame, intolerable England no more! Here, among the most beautiful mountains, I purpose to take up my abode, and make "my everlasting mansion" also, to speak in the language, not I hope acting in the "latter spirit," of Timon. Should such, however, be the sullen spirit of some world-weary wight, of wounded mind, among thy nervous patients, send him here by all means; I will promise him as perfect a solitude as his spleen can desire. Let him but observe one point; that is, to come pennyless, and I stake my life on it, he shall not suffer the least molestation in eating his root by himself, from the intrusion of a living soul; unless, indeed, he

should, like the Athenian, turn up gold in digging for his dinner; in which case I retract my pledge; for I have reason to think very highly of the amiable sociability of the Welsh gentry. There is, however, so little of that *yellow* root (of all evil) above ground here, that there is no great danger of finding it beneath.

In so ridiculous a preamble, thou wilt hardly recognize the patient (still less the '*Quaker*') for whose depression you prescribed a visit to or ramble in Wales. That I have been benefited by following your advice, this levity may serve to prove, equally with my resolution to exceed the dose of your remedy, and wander here, for ever, instead of for a summer.

I have also commenced fulfilling thy request (which I am aware was but a further mental recipe in disguise) to keep a sort of travelling Diary for thy amusement; to transmit any traditions of a curious nature I might pick up from hoary chroniclers—any of those strange dramas of real life, and *village* life, often romantic beyond romance, which the obscurity of village annals eternally secludes from popular notice. You suggested also, that I should write something in the shape of a Tour, and I told you—(mind, I perfectly remember that *Thou* art not more than one man, when I use the plural

pronoun, and do not be puffed up therefore)—I told thee that I would do no such thing—I hated Tours (of Wales above all)—I hated Tourists; that they come to mountains as *gentlemen* travellers; "bring with them airs from" the — *hell* I had almost said—of pestilent London, and they attract fashionable travellers, all on the hunt for those pastoral and peaceful charms of landscape, which eternally keep yielding up the ghost—losing the very essence of their attractions at the mere presence of their pursuers, and their frivolous retinue of menial followers—the corruption of whose society is strangely rapid among the simpler Welsh folk. Wherein one may liken such lovers of primitive life to the anatomists of Pope's simile, who,

> "Following life in creatures they dissect,
> Still lose it in the moment they detect."

All this and more I remarked then; but I have come to a sort of compromise between your imposition of a task, and my aversion. What if I try to mingle the Novel with the *spirit* of a Tour, to *print* the *zest* of travelling and petty adventures, in the "breach" of mountains almost meeting, the perils of the green bog, &c.? This mere spirit will amalgamate with such narratives as Welsh domestic history is rich in;

nor will you fail to receive some portion of that knowledge of the "natives," which books of travels *teach*, even from such gossiping and little didactic method; knowledge possibly not the less pleasant for being only incidental. The thought pleased me; for I shall be glad to make even a nominal return for that professional "value received" from thee, to which I owe my being now seated on a fine sod, with a hillock for my writing desk (on the bank of a romantic river — *Irvon*), instead of sleeping beneath one. What would your city doctors say to receiving, instead of a hundred fees due, a presentation copy of "The Mountain-Decameron," or some such thing? But thou hast that contradiction and eccentricity in thee, that whereas they (at least many very popular ones) are impatient *of* one's complaints, and *for* one's fee; thou, Edvardus Aper, art, to a friend, even to *me*—a *Friend*, in the habit of reversing this order of things, by making the 'of' and the 'for' change places. At least, you evince as earnest an anxiety for that fullness of statement from your poor melancholy interlocutors (and which, by the bye, is in itself a relief that no physician will restrict too severely, if a humane man), as your brethren evince for an end of it, and the little golden epigrammatic point

that attends the close, and restores their good humour.

I have no alternative then, but to keep accumulating, day after day, these my paper fees. *Ten* shall I present thee at a time; but every day will be expressly addressed to thee, as if the post were daily to transmit my rural despatch.

But I have not depended on my solitary excursions for matter of amusement. Chance has thrown in my way a few persons very congenial to a pensive traveller's taste, and precisely the only kind that I could have borne under my then frame of mind.

In the process of time's natural cure of grief, there occurs a period, in which, after our sad and sullen soul-estrangement from the world, we grow weary of our drear selves, though yet unreconciled to society. I think I had reached this stage, when I fell in with *two* (at least) of those unworldly characters whose habits are retiring, if not a little misanthropical, and which formed, to me, a grateful sort of medium between solitude and society, the gaiety of which seems, to the mourner, an eternal insult to the dead. To this I may add, that, in traversing a country such as this, whose character is that of the beautiful and gentler sublime, we find

that green quietude of nature which inspires only a fine romantic melancholy friendly to philosophy, when we have some heart somewhere to repay us for the pain of solitude, and open *some* time to the overflowing of ours—inspiring something terribly different from philosophy or romance, when that time is never to come,—such heart never to open,—when such inspirings, and such fullness of feeling may pass away untreasured, because there is no living soul for which we care to treasure them. When hope faints, and hearts sicken, and enjoyment itself, no longer communicable, languishes into pain, under an unshared existence, scenery does not lose its charm, but that charm becomes a sort of fascination, tempting the solitary to yet deeper solitude, even to the turning away from mankind—thence to deeper and deepest sadness, and insanity—the death of mind.

Hence, I begin to hold it more than good luck, even a sort of salvation, that I have fallen in with the persons who are to be of your company daily, if such be your pleasure, and I should be able to mentally introduce them to thee. The moodiness of one (by the way, one of your profession, but an idler—a doctor of the mountains)—the halcyon nature and kind-

heartedness of another of them—the whimsical conceits, odd ambition, and odder figure (I am sure he will never read this *profane* Journal of mine) of a third, a Cambrian reverend gentleman—all these keep parrying the deeper deadlier impression of these (now) mournful mountains, and converting many a source of deepest and darkest thinking into the gay and superficial play of thoughts.

Now, as to the travelling part of my Diary, distinct from the story-telling—I can truly assure thee that there is matter in abundance for rational curiosity, left in Wales, and, what is better, strong vestiges of what we may surely characterise as patriarchal life, if life as rudely simple, yet happy, as that recorded of very early times may be so designated. The *secluded* Welsh breeder of sheep and tender of cattle, leads a life of solitary wildness truly curious to the curious in man's nature—one of pastoral peace, if not pastoral vagrancy, that leaves little to the imagination to fill up for that of an ancient man of woolly wealth, or a modern one among the Bedouin Arabs.

When you read of the picture of primitive modes of even Cambrian life being now wholly lost, of MacAdam and the schoolmaster having swept both Ignorance and Pastoral in their pri-

mitive character out of Britain, you may, I am very sorry and happy to say, suspend your belief. Tourists—bookmakers I mean,—follow the routes of predecessors, and see with their eyes, and nothing beyond; thence I believe it is that so little is known of the domestic lives and characters of the direct descendants of the Britons, our fellow countrymen.

Persons accustomed to consider a corrupt metropolis as the chief stage of high adventure in the range of the stormy passions, and a pastoral region, such as Wales, as that of rural innocence, or minor and rustic offences only, would feel some surprise at the character of many events occurring in the most peaceful districts of the mountains. Nor are wanting instances of a gloomy and intense character in many incidentally or directly divulged at our criminal bar. Light as is the Welsh calendar (to the high honour of the people) in the *number* of criminals (a maiden assize, as all must remember, being no unfrequent occurrence in both North and South Wales), yet, in the dye of the *crime*, emphatically speaking, when such *does* spot this general fair fame of the Principality, there is a deeper shade than marks the average of crime in England, or wherever the many diversions of minds and hearts into multiform modes

of selfishness, soften down the moral surface of the commonplace society into one level of wider but less deep depravity. Certain it is, that at intervals (the interim being beautifully void of almost all offence), there stands, startling the general gentle spirit of a pastoral people, at the bar of justice, some tremendous culprit, morally grim all over in black and blood. The circumstances rising dismal to light, as each shuddering witness diffuses his own awed and tremulous solemnity of feeling over the whole court, death-silent in expectation, are of such a nature as transports the cultured listener's mind to lands very different to the rustic Wales of his previous ideas, to those where live

"Souls made of fire, and children of the sun."

He is astonished on recalling his thought to what is present, to see at the bar on trial of life or death, a rustic, a mere *real* shepherd! a man whose outer life is all calm and monotony, but his inward a very hurricane of passions.

Now, odd as it may be, the reading of these narratives, involving much of these impassioned traits of character, though not presented in such horrible aspects of retribution as trials or executions, seems nowhere more interesting to me, than when resorted to in the deep repose

of summer twilight, and the vacancy of a sort of *gypsy*-journey in which thy patient is now engaged. Perhaps the contrast pleases. I am sure that the sylvan calm and beauty of our chosen spots where we pitch our *tents* (yea, our tents; though we tell no fortunes, nor think or fear for our own)—I say the glow of a June sunset, on a mountain side or river dale, derives a double charm from such deep plungings into the abyss of human hearts. Divine Nature and ——— Man—(who shall fill up that hiatus with a fitting epithet?) set off each other in strongest relief. It is like finding, as we often do, among the ruins of some abbey yellowed by sunset and rich in all the pompous yet soothing colouring of autumn, a brambled pit, full of toads! dangerous with snakes, and only verdant with the 'deadly nightshade,' only flowery with the poison of the foxglove! How pleasant, after spying down into its damp horror, to look round again at the sweet mellow landscape, as the sun looks its last over the sheepwalk ridge, and that monastic ruin itself gives half its charm (notwithstanding that ugly hole) with its mockery of windows, to that placid whole! Such is a peep into the heart of man in the midst of pensive contemplations of nature.

Such then being the kind of entertainment which for ten days I propose to provide for thee, I shall first ask, Art thou willing to take a cup of tea and a tale with us under some "romantic mountain forest-crowned"? To sit at our tent's mouth on some sunshiny sod, betwixt a hanging wood and water, "far from the haunts of men" (yet peradventure busier with man than ever), sung to by the woodlark or cuckoo, or plained to by the owl, possibly? for our odd amateur-gypsy the Doctor, is fond of reading on into the night, by a very bright moon, or his little lamp when the night is sultry and still. If possible I will make you our guest, without endangering you by night air, or bivouac, or dewy greensward, by remitting you the very feeling of the hour, at the hour, by putting forth my writing tools, even by that lamp if day's be "burned out." (My own health has vastly improved under this novel regimen.) Although weeks or months may elapse before you receive these my dispatches, "written on the field"—of flowers, not of blood—still I prefer penning them on the spur of the occasion—(the spur of the scenic and pictorial beauty of landscape) to writing from mere cold recollection when the glow of the moment is gone for ever.

Moreover, be not surprised, if, after my taking leave of thee at night in this my most disorderly Diary, you find me (or us) by the place I date from next morning, to have taken a miraculous night journey, too long for aught but seven-leagued boots or the Chapel of Loretto to perform. Understand, in explanation, that this *next* day in the journal is *not* our next day, but the first *agreable* next day, as I shall observe the plan of selection both in the romances and our daily travels. We shall have stages dreary as well as pleasant; and our story-teller, the Doctor, will have his intolerable tales as well as his tolerable. These unhappy stages or prosing tales, which I must suffer myself—far be it from me to inflict on thee. Hence my Diary will be any thing rather than one of ten *continuous* days. For example, I date this from the vicinity of the conflux of the Wye and Irvon, a grotesque nook of the latter near the end of its course, full of rocky ledges, making it a grand and rude channel, down which its whitening waters foam, and roar and tumble very nobly—but our travels will begin in North Wales.

Heavens! what a luxury of pure and innocent thoughts—what a sabbath of rest from all troublous, anxious, wicked, or overwrought

feelings—what a delicious disdain of the whole world and its little selfish doings on the outside of our mighty green walls, starred with the lone taper of the cottage by night, beautified with its lone curling smoke-wreath, and the dim white lambs of its owner by day—what a self-hugging glorious contempt of *Time* (the old crabbed task-master of mankind)—let him and his officious gnomon point where they will, to midnoon or midnight—what a fine rapture of peace and goodwill towards men, yea, beasts, trees, reptiles, comes like an angelic resurrection from a grave over one's whole nature, in such scenes as I have been enjoying, turning a bad man into a penitent, and a good one into an angel, for the hour! such blessed, blue, clear, all-innocent, beatified hour of paradise restored!

But now for the ITINERIS PERSONÆ! (I love dramatic doings.) 1. Myself. 2. Major R******** 3. Rev. Ezekiel Evans. 4. Dr. ****, a physician of the mountains, commonly called "The Rural Doctor" in his own neighbourhood (that is his *winter* hiding-place, his *home* being the air and the mountain top).

To these I must, after my own oblique perhaps crab-like fashion, introduce thee. So first—welcome thou personified Goodnature, ex-

cellent Major R. of the village of ——, on the river T * * * !

Here is a soldier, a scholar, and a gentleman, became a poor angler for conscience sake, the best of Christians, a *natural* Christian, in his abhorrence of his bloody occupation! He threw up his commission in disgust, after distinguishing himself for bravery in the Peninsular war. The fact will cause my Major to be recognised, perhaps, by some of his old companions in arms, should they ever read this. Let *them* enjoy their promotions; he has *his* in that pure Court where stars and orders have no currency—an innocent bosom, and bloodless conscience. With a stature of six feet three, a fine sunburnt countenance, beaming perfect content and benignity, though touched, in the least degree, with the *pensive*, combining in his proper person the grace and gallant manner (though subdued) of the former soldier, the *mindliness* of the former scholar, (for his college learning doubtless does not survive entire, after his many changes of life,) the gentleness of a most halcyon nervous system and temper, he adds to all these a singular bashfulness, and a simplicity quite childlike, yet not weak, derived, no doubt, from his long exclusive intercourse with the most rustic, yet most pleasing,

portion of the Welch people, — the *retired* sheep-breeders among the mountains. These odd combinations make up a perfect unique of character, to me extremely delightful. He knows almost every old oak-root, and every dark pool, and every bright silvery shallow, bubbling by some antique bridge, of every river in Wales. Scarcely an old green thatched farm shews its blue smoke in the still noon, on any wild slope overlooking the course of a river, but he tells you, "*There* I was benighted, and 'they took me in': " and he tries to recall the names of every one of the little wild laughing family that he romped with at sunrise next morning, in their patch of wild meadow ground, and rarely forgets one. Indeed, he always renews his visits on such occasions, with a great basket of fish, and something for every child there including the *mother*, for all are children; and his own happy disposition, as does their exclusion from worldly cares, makes *him* one, in all that adorns and sweetens childhood. Hence he has a sort of general intimacy with this happy people; a very "wide circle of acquaintance." It is delightful to see two or three barefoot little beings, fresh as morning, and shy and wild as deer, the genuine mountain-born, hurrying towards us, and hanging on

the hands of so noble a figure (whatever its envelope) as our Major's, each forgetting his shyness, and asking a toss in his arms, or invading his pockets for gingerbread or a fish.

Owing to this mode of life, he has acquired the habits of the mountaineers, men who having nothing to cloak, and no part to act, throw themselves open to a stranger at once, and expect the same from him. Hence he often startles a worldly man by questions such as children only ask, but *men* in a less artificial state of society might rationally ask also. "How old are you, sir?" or, "Did you retire from the world for pleasure; or from disappointment, embarrassment, or"—These may serve to exemplify this species of oddity in him.

As to his externals, these—(always excepting his undisguisable nobleness of front, expanse of fair brow, and blue benignity of eye)—by no means indicate the officer or fashionable man; so that none could detect the gallant soldier in the bronzed and wandering solitary of the river-banks, often homeless for a month together, his night-watch on the tented field exchanged for a bivouac in a hollow oak, and the innocent "field" where daisies, and such families of flowers only, live and die, not the

dark-hinting *llysau gwaed gwyr* — the "plants of the blood of man."*

Indeed, with his worn fishing-jacket, (over which he now and then wears his belt and long disused sword, *mirabile dictu!* alas for the weakness of the wise!) tanned face, shapeless straw hat, huge pockets stuffed with materials for long piscatory campaigns, with gentles and half-finished flies, cock-feathers, maggots, and a little dirt to nourish them, escaping through a box full of holes, and "remainder biscuits" left since last month's travel, marbles, and nuts, and penny books for his "many friends," — not omitting some soiled classic miniature volume at the bottom of all — I say, with this budgetting upper garb, and his huge Dutch trowsers, become *stratified* in colours by his various heights of standing in various-coloured turbid rivers, in salmon-fishing, marked like a post at a ford, added to a certain "fish-like smell," "a villainous compound," now and then exhaling from said pockets, &c. &c. our poor Major would appear something of a monster to the gay promenaders of a sea-side "Terrace" or "Parade" at a watering-place.

* This plant, found in certain parts of Wales, derives its name from the belief that wherever it grows the ground has been moistened with human carnage, in battle or murder.

Very rarely, he is to be seen for a few minutes in such place at unfashionable hour; but like a ghost at cock-crow, or some great and strange marine creature, come to bask on a sunny coast rock, for a few minutes, then replunging into its element, so our Major is instantly "seen no more for ever,"—gone back to the wild green privacy of that river's course, which has led him thus, for one peep, up to its gay and thronged embouchure, the Ystwith, or Dovey, or Wye.

No—he does not *look* the gentleman, certainly; but who can forget the cause? *I*—as a *Friend*—one of a faith plighted against war, last of any one; but neither ought any *Christian* to forget. Should *you*, my doctor and my friend, ever come hither, and espy such grotesque figure standing by some stream, composed as one of the river-side tree-trunks shivering with ivy, I entreat thee to remember *why* he is a "man of the woods," instead of a man of blood; and that if, in his exterior, he does not resemble "the gentleman," it is only because *internally*, in his love of mankind, his pity for man's madness, his hatred of war, his self-sacrifice in that holy cause,—he *more* resembles him who died to found a religion of *peace*, which says, "Thou shalt not kill!"—

Him whom Decker, quaintly, but not profanely, has called, "*the first true gentleman that ever lived!*"

Another of our motley group is the Rev. Ezekiel Evans, a young Welsh clergyman, a somewhat comical graft of orthodoxy on methodism—I mean that he grew into a youth, as a frequenter of the lowest kind of conventicle under an extravagant fisty performer on the "drum ecclesiastic," and was then "put out," through a short noviciate in one of the *Welsh* colleges (till lately the chief channel to orders) to the church—that church which had been the scoff of his boyhood, under the nickname of the "steeple house." A frequent species this of transmutation of faith in the clergy, not to be approved, but inevitable where, as in so many instances, the poor parents of such boy are zealous Dissenters, yet induced by interest to secure for their son a support in the service of that church which they do not approve. Hence arises that sort of compromise preserved, not without a struggle, between the professed orthodoxy and the still well-beloved heterodoxy, visible in many South-Wallian clergy. A wag might be wicked enough to hint that many of them carry orthodoxy in the pocket and heterodoxy in the heart. Our

small pale friend is an example of this to excess. He is an adorer of Wesley's memory—nay, the humbler "*Jupiter Tonans*" of his poor parents' wild village, is fondly remembered, and even imitated. Ezekiel tries at a deep "*hem*," like the "Minister of the Gospel" his boyhood trembled at, and his mother cried and *jumped* at; he affects *his* heavy step (I learn he was a huge beef-faced "oily man of God," a grazier, with lungs like a forge-bellows); his ordained deserter, yet follower, even *tries* at *his* pious bellow, and with his little fist he does good execution on the pulpit; but as for the rest of the performance, he being lame from a stunted leg, white-faced, and his voice no more terrible than a penny trumpet, 'tis but a poor imitation after all. He does his best, however, to be Evangelical. He cuts his dark hair formally straight across, close down upon his little eyes, is rather apt to look grave at the most innocent mirth, and sigh for nothing at all; and in his pulpit nobly rebuts Pope's sneer about "never mentioning hell to ears polite," by mentioning nothing else.

One might fancy he had "lisped in" Scripture, as Pope did in verse, so biblical is his common talk; and that he thought to uphold our reverence for the Sacred Volume by using

it as a slang dictionary. Your future acquaintance the Doctor, who detests that trick of the Evangelical, and never turns away from any wickedness of whim that he hath permitted, once asked him if he "would not like to see the day when all other phrases should be forbidden than those of the Bible; when lovers shall whisper in the dark about the mystery of the Trinity, or grow warm, as they chat on the style by moonlight, on the subject of the fires in Smithfield? How edifying to overhear merchants on change interlarding talk of the rise and fall of stocks, with little episodes about the fall of man, or rising of the deluge!"

Be it told, however, that Ezekiel (the parson I shall call him, for I love old-fashioned English) is an excellent son. This trait covers a multitude of ridiculous ones, in our eyes; in truth, out of this very virtue, so worthy of admiration, grows the wildest and absurdest of them all! So apt is the very richness of the soil of the human heart to put forth the rankest growths! His mother being what is called a most *serious* woman, she frets at her only son's being without the pale of *her* only saving communion, not one of the elect; and her half-repentant son almost hates the bread he receives in shape of tithe from a little living,

because it precludes field preaching. Meanwhile, he lives on, in hope of that luxury yet—of becoming a wandering Wesley; of cheering his mother's heart and his own, by drawing a huge mob of the elect round her green-topped farm hovel, *yet*, on some Sabbath-day eve, without the fear of the *Bishop* before his eyes; that is to say, when he shall have thrown off the burthen of his living, on the profits of—certain "Sacred Poems," which he is hunting subscribers for! and whence arose the happy addition of this whimsical character to our party.

Yet who can laugh at the *filial* feature in this wild dream? How inseparably woven in are the black yarn and the motley—the colours of sin and folly—with the white, in our web of life!. Conceit, a little ingratitude to the Disposer of human affairs, ignorant discontent, bad faith as a priest, and—the love of a son!—a beautiful flower, with its dirty roots in the air alone visible! For I must add that his real love for a mother is the only merit of his that our friend allows to *lie hidden;* and this because she is a poor woman. Hence he keeps it as profound a secret that he devotes half his (distasteful) revenues to her support, as if he robbed her as regularly; but "murder will out;" so he has been detected. When I add that he is

rather deaf, and loves flattery and fame and good fare, extremely, I think you will be acquainted with him.

My other fellow traveller, and the leader and originator of our pilgrimage, is the last I have to notice, and shall not long detain us, as his character will, I suppose, unfold itself hereafter. It is sufficiently enigmatical to me at present. As it is always pleasant, however, to pick up a little sly foreknowledge of those we are going to meet, I may here remark that he seems to be a man whose mind may rather be said to command him, by some morbid process through which it is become independent on his will, than he can be said to possess and command his mind. Perhaps I mean his mental *impulses*—perhaps I don't know what I mean precisely. No matter. Do you study this human enigma, as I bring you better acquainted. Among other oddities, he has that of a bitter disappointment in literature. "What has he published?" you inquire. Nothing! "How then? Beaten in the race, and never has run?" Oh, but he declares that there is no longer such a thing as *Fame* in England, so the prize is gone: there's no "*Plate*" to run for! that Fame now means a week's or month's mention of your name or book among the authors "of the *Day*"—a very

correct expression. That where the "world" reads for novelty only, fighting for its favour is like the gladiator's fight, the issue certain death; for the next work published must be the conqueror, because it will inevitably be the newer. I leave these matters. But he has suffered more decided disappointments than this equivocal one, I presume, by deaths of friends and other events, which have driven him, long ago, to seek out, as he says, "a bye-lane" to death, with its cool green footing, instead of the noisy highway to the "dark inn," and finds peace, if it can be attained, the best ambition. His soul sickened at all the world calls success in life, beyond the humblest support of life. In his own profession, a soundless gallop on the mountain-top sod, in a moonlight midnight, had more attraction for him than the city glories of his brethren, he composing (for he has the lyrical fury on him sometimes) to the "rumble" of the thundering cataract, more willingly than to that of "chariot wheels."

So, for the present, fare thee well!

THE

MOUNTAIN-DECAMERON.

FIRST DAY.

ARGUMENT.

The Quaker traveller who wrote the preceding epistle, remits to his London correspondent, an account of an additional fellow-traveller; also one from the latter's budget of Cambro-British romantic tales.

MORNING.

From our Island of the Estuary of the *Traeth Bach*—Merionethshire.

WHOEVER follows the road from Harlech to Beddgellert, and the region of Snowdonia, comes, at about three miles distance, to the solitary shore of a noble estuary formed by the mouth of the river *Dyrrwhyd*, where it expands into sea, after washing the bases of green and pastoral mountains, and precipices with forest trees, and their almost vertical masses of shade.

Nothing in landscape can exceed the soft beauty or the solemn grandeur of this intimate intermixture of marine and *home* scenery; of the peeping huts of shepherds, and the tower-

ing sail of the adventurous merchant ship, departing for distant shores,—of the whole "deep deep sea" on one hand, and on the other the lessening, narrowing distance of the river, hiding its diminished head under bowering oaks, and approximating mountains; these last presenting the softest sunshiny green slopes to the sun. There, this broad, brimming, blue basin, like a bay of itself, which its conflux with ocean presents, shrinks into the pastoral perspective of a gentle river running up into rural haunts, a mere sky-blue open brook, threading at low water the mid channel, deserted by the sea, through which the Welsh peasant-lover can wade on a bright Sunday to meet a sweetheart. On each side, a marbled expanse of the finest sands stretches away, yellowing in the gold light of a summer morning. No horrid depth of black mud (half smothering you in imagination with its mere look), here scowls, on the retrocession of the sea.

"The extent of these sands is great, and the prospect of them horrible," quoth Lord Lyttelton. In storm and coming night-fall, I grant it is; but their effect, when seen by sun and summer's blue, joined to the noble green *banks*, (those banks being sides of vast mountains) and over-skimmed by snowy sea-gulls, is that

of a soft, solemn, beautiful repose, as far from horror, as the calm of a sweet sleep is from the grim grandeur of the sleep of death.

As we stand on the edge of the sea-river—a crowd of mountain-tops is in lofty distance before us, rolled up yet in a night of their own, but grimly yielding to the broad morning laugh of the whole sea firmament, of June-blue, and a sun making that sea glister gloriously. The brilliant dazzle of such an object as the whole floor of the great deep, is relieved by the view of several dim islands off the promontory of Llynn, and the *vision* of a shore, the blueish shadowy outline of one, more distant still.

But close beside us, all is home-felt beauty —the little ferry house, the pattering of a sea at play with real green banks, all that a quiet eye can desire, to transmit a sympathetic quietude to a heart at rest, in the way of scenery is here, as if no such things as mountainous waves, and wrecks, and cast-up dead, and exile "beyond the seas," were in this beautiful world!

Meadows, a little marsh ground, the wild-wood and greensward heights just described, lowing cows, bleating lambs, singing barefoot girls among them all, and that smiling, heaving, half sea, half river—are all that meet eye or ear! The depth of sands in the lane-like

road, adds to the charm. The little that there is of agricultural "stir" in this part, is hence performed almost without sound, the humble pony team and *gamboo*, or sledge without wheels for bringing in the hay harvest, all moving as if hushed on purpose to avoid breaking the charming silence, leaving it to those sounds only which add to its effect—the plaintive sea-birds' crying, or more cheerful land birds' song, coming from those retreating heights of ancient woods.

Close to the water, indeed *in* it, stands a decent "public" as *we* Welsh call an alehouse. Though the *folks* are a little rude and ignorant, their domicile makes amends for this. It is very delicious, at the same time surprising, to wake in this sort of *amphibious* abode, for, such it is, the tide, when in, washing the walls, and you looking down from your chamber-window *on*—the sea! Though you see it beating your house walls like the ribs of a ship, however, if the morning be calm all is gentle grandeur as it patters like a lake, and you find your *ship* stedfast, your cabin window visited by swallows, adorned with eaves, and your ears regaled with "earliest birds" as sweetly as ever. No barbarous bawling, whooping, creaking, or rocking, nor pitch, nor tar, (nor Jack Tar,) is

there to horrify every sense of you—a landsman. Instead, a merry shepherd is heard on the breast of a mountain on the land side of your Janus-faced ark, or girl calling cows, and larks singing, and that (to me) pleasantest of simple symphonies, the mingling sounds of many little streams of milk into different milking vessels. Meanwhile, there is reflected into your eyes from some great green precipice of sunshiny mountain, such a green-coloured, tender, gold light, as assures you you *cannot* be at sea, notwithstanding your catching the low yet tremendous peal of the broad ocean's breaking on the shore near at hand.

We were ferried over to a small island, of a few acres extent, lying about a mile out in the mid estuary, and found it a sort of epitome of Wales (Inys Gyftan its name, I think), containing rock, wood, beach, sands, heath, cliff, in miniature, and—*one* house, as grey and grotesque as some anchorite's cell. Above it hung a rock all ivy, and on its roof (green as the ground) stood perched a goat (one of the few surviving of that race in Wales). He put us in mind, as he stood and wondered at us with his beard tinged with dew-wet buttercups, that "streamed like a meteor," et cætera—of Gray's Bard; for the fate of his race allied him to that

"last minstrel." We climbed to the higher ground—the "table land" of our isle, and while wading the heath and fern there—"What's here?" said the Major. A wreath of smoke curled up, as if out of the ground before us. But on reaching it we found that our level there ended in a perpendicular wall of rock, and that the smoke rose from a gipsy fire (or one of gipsy fashion) at the base of this rock, where a snug square of greensward afforded a pleasant breakfasting place, walled in by crags on three sides, and roofed with dog-roses, and a far projecting mass of ivy. A middle-aged man with somewhat of the "rueful countenance" of La Mancha's knight, lay idling with a book; two boys were busied with the fire, burning pale in the sunshine; the remains of a good breakfast were on their white cloth; and cowslips lay abundant round the solitary's seat, which the boys had gathered for their father.

As we all peeped down through the ivy, we saw his odd starts and gestures, his looks now despairing and morose, now joyous, according as he looked within his own mind, perhaps, or without, on glorious nature. Sometimes he tried to stare at the sun, as if he would look back that electric rapture which its full laugh seemed to wake through his frame, and his eye

rested on the perfect blue without a cloud, with such expression of charmed intensity as a lover's does on a consenting mistress's face of smiles and beamy eye.

"There's a depth of—of—at least *two inches* and a half of prime fat on that ham!" Ezekiel whispered to me.

This wanderer (we learned afterwards) had come to the island in the preceding evening's fog, and never dreamed of there being a house on it. Neither had he suspicion of our having been landed on the island, our ferryman having put us on the opposite side of it, whither his indolence had not allowed him yet to wander, so that he was hugging himself in a sort of Robinson Crusoe dream.

"He's a monstrous fool, Sir!" our parson whispered again, "at least that or a madman, by his wild ways—and yet!—to judge from his providing *such* a breakfast—what taste! what foresight! what——" "Hush, hush!" the Major murmured, for the recluse began talking poetry to himself. He was certainly stricken with the *Muse's* madness, or intoxication, or whatever we must call that fatal temperament that so often acts to the heart, and all the hopes and blisses nestling there in youth, the part of the cuckoo's unfledged young

in the sparrow's nest, fatally admitted by the foolish bird—admitted and nursed to the destruction of its natural offspring; that passion pregnant with future curses (even to utter waste of life, to madness, to violent death,) which so often leaves in the whole wasted bosom of its wretched possessor nothing but its worthless, melancholy self, to gnaw heart and madden brain, without one atoning comfort!

In each interval of his ecstatic extravagance excited by the fine weather—in that "languid pause"—his face became like that of another man—and one on no good terms with the world or life or man, and hardly *Heaven;* for something of expression not detected in the visage of a uniformly good man, often passed like a cloud over his; not quite completing Milton's image of "thrice changed with pale ire, envy, and despair," yet recalling to one's thought the idea of that transfiguration of the fallen Spirit, about to reconnoitre forbidden Paradise. Yet I was pleased (while my companions ceased peeping awhile) to watch the soothing influence of childhood on a rugged nature, evinced in his boyishness of glee as his younger son (a little boy of fair complexion, with curly head, and pleasing intelligence of look,) ran up from time to time to chatter with the father, or

bring him more flowers, of which he seemed insatiate in his desire.

The effect of that fair fresh face, and those joyous eyes, looking at that sullen one, and into those saddened eyes of the parent, was like the purple of the glory-darting sun, just surmounting a height, and peeping into a wood of all cypress, lighting up its dark a little way, in spite of its sable ceiling;—the sweet smile created its own likeness under the hanging brow and scowl of the world-weary man, despite his gloom of thoughts, keeping a night in his depth of mind still.

Now be not impatient, my friend, or my reader, of all this! These little traits are the lesser features of a *mind* with which you are to travel, cheek by jowl, through three weary stages—*alias* volumes. No otherwise can I bring you acquainted with your fellow-traveller. This, too, is the man who is to clothe in his own language, many a Welsh tradition, and some "passages" in his own life's experience, and some gleanings by sick beds' and by death beds' sides, for your (and all the world's) delectation.

Will you not chuse to know your host, to see him *as he is*, in his fancied solitude, wholly unstripped of the worldly mask, naked to

Nature and his children, before you obey his "Follow me?" Directly or indirectly, I doubt not, from his strong sociability of nature long frozen up, that having now made us his companions, he will disburthen his whole mind and his whole heart to thee and us; and what a fine thing it is to pore over *any* cabinet broken open, much more a human breast! and to see a man turned inside out, as children pry into an opened watch!

"I wish," said he, "to my heart, our whole ramble were in one such island as this after another! No soul but ourselves upon it! The sun! the sea! the mountains! and *ourselves!*

'I am monarch of all I survey!' "———

"Nobody but ourselves, Pa?" said the two boys at once. "Don't you know there's a house t'other side?"

"The devil! a *house?*"

"Oh ah, and we forgot to tell you. As you lay with your head rolled outside of our tent-curtain, and your mouth wide open, just as it grew light but thick of fog, there was an old woman's face *so* wrinkled! peeped down on you, through that ivy overhead—we were *so* frightened!"

"Ten devils! *an old woman peeping down?*"

"Yes, Pa, just up *there,* look! why, goodness!

if I did'nt think I saw some *men's* faces now, pushing among the leaves!"

"Zounds! boys, what next? *Men's faces?* Oh, there's no reaching a solitude, now, I suppose, short of the North Pole and the white bears—pack up, boys, pack up! where's the horse? Gather the things—"

The boys at last recomforted the perturbed recluse, by persuading him that the last triple apparition was but their fancy. Then he looked long in the younger boy's face, who led him somewhere by the hand, to shew him a bower of boughs they were making, in which work he joined with glee and vigour, more than he had, perhaps, ever experienced when himself a boy. Yet he soon returned to his *lair*, the green nook of rock, casting up a gloomy jealous eye of distrust at the lofty festoon of ivy, as if to reassure himself of no one being there, we all three watching him all the while. At last he seemed at ease, and we heard him mutter "Charles's birthday!" Anon, the poetic fit seemed upon him, and as if he had been still holding the hand so lately put into his, he began to recite these stanzas, probably composed before that morning. He has since given me a copy of them; so I insert them.

MY BOY'S BIRTHDAY.

INSTEAD of all, of soothing kind,
Vital to peace, in life's decline,
As blood to life—what do I find ?
This little hand in mine !
Of all that under heaven's wide cope,
Seemed mine, by perjury of Hope,
What's left me, as to death I grope ?
Its blue sunshine !

With nought to hope, yet much to fear,
In life's grim nightfall left to pine,
To earth—this rock !—what chains me here ?
This hand, this hand of thine !
This pleasing pain, this painful joy,
Which all unconsciously, dear boy,
Thou putt'st in mine.

And yet I want some *other* eye,
With mine to see thy soft ones shine ;
I want some *other* heart to sigh
And fear for thee, with mine ;
For God forbid this darksome mind,
And haunted heart should ever find
Fit mates in thine !

Thou blest blue heaven ! *thou*, playmate-friend !
My heart's sole anchorage are you ;
That blue will frown—that playtime end,
Then, comforter, adieu !
And oh,—death's ever ready dart !
Mortal, oh mortal, boy, thou art ;
Soon this warm hand—have comfort, Heart,
For *thou* art too !

Wearied of wandering here, a wretch,
When leaves lie dead, and foul floods rave,
When downwards my wild arms I stretch,
Impatient for a grave,—
Then think I on *thy* helpless plight,
My motherless! in shock'd affright,
Think on *thee* left an orphan *quite*,
And thou dost save!

Hail! then, my treasure, safe to land
Through all the perils of a year!
Still do I hold thee by this hand?
Still healthful, and still here?
Thanks, Heaven!—this well-timed pulse and palm
So cool, shall be as sun and psalm,
To make *one* blessed Sabbath calm,
For *me*, my dear!

So hand in hand, a little while,
We'll haunt the wild brooks, pick the flowers;
What though *mine* be a hollow smile,
Not *mine* thy coming hours?
Neither are my pains coming thine;
Though soon divides thy path and mine,
Grief shall not blot *this* day's sunshine,
Howe'er fate lowers.

Yet go—with fitter playmates "keep"
Thy birthday, with "feast," frolic, glee;
The tears thou shalt not see me weep,
Are fittest "gifts" from me
This hand for me, that heart for those,
Mine, one sweet hour—theirs to-day's close
Hands, heart, and glee.

Yet I'll be with thee to the end,
Though lonely on some mountain heath,
Thy birthday with thy *spirit* spend,
As might mine after death,
Follow thee every where ;—Heaven send
For thee some more effectual friend,
To love, to cherish, to defend—
And take this breath !

Soon after the conclusion of this soliloquising poetic flight of the father, we deputed the courteous Major to introduce us all to this wild man of the isle (and lord of it as he thought), and in a short time we were all very sociably mingled in conversation, enjoying the pleasant lassitude of a hot day's approach, under shade of rock and thicket, and the imaginary coolness imparted by the sight and sound of water all round us. Ezekiel was *prevailed* on to *taste* the stranger's ham, and declared he had "never tasted richer, mellower, fatter, in short finer!" in all his born days, since the time when he was a boy, and used to eat his mother's, *raw!* "That *did* beat it!"

It was not long before I drew forth the fact that our rural host (whose home is in Brecknockshire, at least his house of mason work, his *summer*-house being the tent that we saw lurking in a rock-rift, overhung by a tree,) has a budget of little romances, founded on facts

chiefly, communicated to him in the remote secluded hamlets where his pleasure rambles of every summer lead him. Some of these he had along with him, and he promised to procure from home others for our entertainment.

"Tales," he remarked, "have become so hacknied a form of composition, that I once thought of committing mine to the flames, not to add to the plague of them which has been overwhelming the land. But sagely reflecting, I said to myself, what after all is the Iliad but a 'tale' of a siege and a sacked city? what are Macbeth, and Hamlet, but 'tales' told by dialogue?—what but 'tales' in verse or prose are Paradise Lost, and Jack the Giant Killer?"

Without more preamble then, imagine us, (except the Major, who went at low water to fish in the mid-channel river,) all listening to the following Story.

THE TRAGICAL PASSION

OF

MARMADUKE PAULL.

Diasbad mererit am gorchuyt heno,
Ac nim hawt *gorluyt*.
Diasbad mererit i ar van kaer,
Hyd ar Duw i dodir.
Gnawd gwedi traha tranc hir!

The western wave shouts "woe!" to me this night!
My all of good now yields me no relief.
The western wave shouts above the rampart top!
Up up to God it is proclaiming,
"To insolent joy succeeds eternal ruin!"

Ancient Welch MS. by the bard Gwyddno; date of MS. 1100, *and Translation.*

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG female in the first bloom of womanhood, with dark and languishing eyes, sensitive and somewhat melancholy countenance, who should be seen to extend her neat but unstudied person, day after day, on the same sea-side crag, and watch the horizon of

sea for some sail, seeming fated never to bless those expecting eyes—such an object would be pronounced at once, a lover looking for a lover's return.

Such an object *was* to be seen, long ago, on that solitary projection of the county of Carnarvon, beyond the town of Conway, known by the name of the Peninsula of the *Creiddin*, terminating in two noble headlands, the Great and Little Orme's Head; the former that awful marine mountain head, which, when viewed from the opposite side of the bay (Beaumaris), looks cut off quite from the land, so boldly does its tremendous precipice, with its grand coast of caverns below, abut upon the sea. But this *Sappho* of a mountain maid (for her expression of countenance, at least, partook somewhat of the character that classic recollections attach to that poetess,) had never known a lover; all her months, nay, years of weary watching were all for a father—a father too, whom she had never seen, who had never seen her! Her home was a wild cottage farm-house in that maritime yet pastoral solitude; for such it is, as leading to no place or port, and not then enlivened by even the few visitors connected with a copper-mine, which has been since opened near the extremity, but dedicated to pasturing sheep and cattle, to which its prevailing features

of treeless sod (though interspersed are some very ancient woods,) render it suitable.

Her mother, the owner of that farm, was a woman named *Paull*, that being her second husband's name, but constantly called by her maiden name, that of Woolstoncraft, according to common custom in many parts of Wales even up to this day. The story of this woman, called also "Alice, the Broken Heart," was a melancholy one. She was first married for money-sake, when almost a child, by covetous parents. When her old and odious husband died, leaving the young and then beautiful widow a competency, a long chronic ailment withered her for years, the years when her over-empassioned nature might have well met suitable returns. Her charms were a little on the wane when this long infirmity wholly left her. Then it was, that being of the most loving disposition, withal delicate of nerve, low spirited, *needing* a husband in the most refined sense (and, to speak truth, also in every less spiritualized sense), she cast her eyes on a very young man, *too* young for her *future*, though not present age, named Marmaduke Paull, and a marriage followed, in the few months of which did poor Alice experience the all of wedded, of *living* bliss, that she was fated to ever know. Nor was even this brief period

unembittered. Alice had never been a mother. With her former cruel and churlish invalid of a husband, it had been her comfort not to be. But the woman's wish rose strong in her heart when nature had found fair play as it were, and every passion of woman sprung as *new-born then*, and clung to this first-found dear object with a sweet sort of voluptuous madness. And now it became a mortification, a misery, that she was not to present one so loved with one image of himself. The impassioned woman would whiten in the lips, bite them, suffer an angry half-groan to escape them, when her handsome and soft-hearted Marmaduke would take some mother's baby out of her arms to dandle in his own, he being passionately attached to little children, and above all things desirous to have a female one of his own. She fancied his eye turned coldly upon herself and her unoccupied bosom, a fair one though it was, from that envied mother's; though Paull was generous and gentle, and would conceal (all he could) the wish which he knew it wrung her heart not to gratify, yet he would sigh involuntarily on these occasions, and the sigh went to her heart. She had even been known from such agitations, after a flood of tears, to fall into hysterics.

But these lesser woes were soon swallowed

up in one all-overwhelming. Paull had been once to sea with an uncle, and became liable to serve in the navy. He was pressed one fine evening while walking with her on the shore close to Conwy. The unhappy woman fought the whole pressgang; but her torments were only sport to those "gallant frank-hearted Tars," as we hear them called; so poor Alice was again a *widow* in that state's affliction. She retired directly to a wild and melancholy farm (her own), within the mighty shadow of the Great Orme's Head, to never more (as she said in her wild woe) be out of reach of the roar and spray and uproar of that sea which was beating round her husband.

In fact, no place could be more fitted as a retreat for melancholy madness, and even to breed it, if that be possible, in an infant mind. Here, it is time to premise that, within the natural period, poor Alice's wish was (too late) fulfilled, and she became a mother; the child was the *Ruth* with whom this tale commenced. There were indeed those who whispered that this child was *not* her own; but that having heard once from him giving hope of his return, she bribed a very poor couple across the bay, to permit a child born to them a burthen and unwelcome, to be secretly conveyed across the few miles of sea by the old midwife and "cun-

ning woman" of the country, who frequented both sides of the estuary of the river Conwy, that she might meet her dear Marmaduke's return with his long-cherished wish, and as he would bless her with *himself* returned beyond all other blessings, she too might in less degree bless him with a beautiful babe, his imagined own. However true this might be, Marmaduke returned no more to deceitful or real joy. The region she had chosen for her abode (to return to the point we diverged from) fostered her melancholy. The dead there divide the narrow sea-washed green soil with its few cultivators and their flocks; for the land, consisting of successive conical hills and hollows, is every where heaved into russet hillocks (with occasional moss-grown *carneddau* or monumental heaps of stones become verdant with turf), which denote the burial places of the Britons. Numerous monastic relics, ruins, and ancient woods, also give their fine solemnity to this unfrequented district. A sea and cavernous coast of extreme danger, reefs and furious currents and far-stretching headlands, add a horror to the maritime landscape; while the occupation of the samphire-gatherer, as described by the great Bard, here seen in its most terrific shape (for the cliffs of Llandudno Rock tower there tremendous),

heightens even the effect of that sea of danger and that shore of wrecks.

As our younger heroine, Ruth, grew of age to wander here alone, and watch for that sail, the never-dying hope of which seemed to keep the declining mother alive, every thing seemed to concur in surrounding the lone child with mysteries and glooms. A strange dim, yet more than dreamy remembrance, hung on her mind, of her very first stage of memory. It was that a very wretched and withered old woman, repeatedly landed in a crazy and foul little boat, rowed by but one man, and hobbled up to her mother's dark stone house, roofed with reeds or fern stalks, in the rock shadows. That whenever she followed her in (like a child, curious,) Alice always excluded her, and was always in tears and great trouble. That this tattered and fierceish old woman would stop on the beach to gaze in her infant face long together; sometimes made an angry groan or grunt at her, but once gave her a cake, and kissed and cried over her. And besides this, she had heard, or caught somehow, the unaccountable impression that she was a *murderess*—had killed a child!

And now the lone and languishing woman's beauty faded rapidly, consumed by a sort of inward fire—a feeling that gnawed eternally,

not sensual, yet so compounded of sentiment and constitution genial to passion, that she felt to herself as one dead, or rather entombed alive, while conscious of such a fine flame burning to waste in her soul. She lived wholly in the past and on the past—the brief burning little past of her conjugal happiness. The flashing summer sunset that then shot in their happy eyes, dazzling across the sea, or the sober-flowered dry marsh which they walked together, embracing and embraced, was still all the sun she saw; the gravest and poorest flower of that russet marsh that they trod on then, in those joyous moments, was beautiful beyond roses—beyond whole Floras, that ever had glowed in her eyes since—her ever seaward eyes, that grew hollow while they rolled over that sea in vain. That short space was all her existence, and the long space since, in which her little Ruth had grown into bloomy womanhood, (while she still dreamed of the dear father's returning to find a *baby* for his lip, his kiss, and knee); that long lapse of time was all only weeping and wishing—but sand drifts and thunder-pealing of waves, the same rock and shadow and treeless marsh, and one neglected child, playing in her eye, yet hardly living in her heart, for want of that *other* heart for which her's might be said to eternally lie a bleeding.

Indeed, her neglect of the child, not harshness, was evident to all; and only her sorrow could account for the coldness she seemed to feel towards so sweet a child—so affectionate a daughter; herself, too, a woman of such extreme capacity for tenderness—such empassioned feeling.

It was nothing strange that the little girl should, at the earliest age, begin to share that despairing kind of expectation of the father's return, which possessed the parent; and weep, when she wept for him, and fancy how fine a form he had when she so painted him to the girl grown bigger; that she should learn to live in perpetual waiting, as it were, for him whose very bones, in all likelihood, had long since mingled with that brine, till the very despair of the withered wife became, in the happier buoyant breast of the daughter, a lively living hope. *She* would not despair,—*she* hoped a father in every sail that specked the background of cloud, or gleamed like a mighty bird of snowy plumage in the closer view of the green sea.

But when the decline of her only known parent became strikingly visible,—when her appetite and powers failed her, and she walked with difficulty over the larger stones of the beach, and needed even the feeble support of Ruth,

the poor girl grew eager for that return which seemed so hopeless, to a degree unfelt before.

Alice had been accustomed to kindle a beacon fire, in heavy fogs and dark weather, on the dark greensward hill for the service of her absent husband, should he, possibly, be making homeward on that dangerous coast. The child would sit or play by this melancholy hopeless beacon for hours, with which the forsaken woman mocked her own despair. She pursued this wild fancy till Ruth was grown of age to understand its purpose. When the mother grew weary of the dream, and no longer busied herself with that beacon, which was more connected with the wildness of despair than hope, the girl often lit one alone, till the few remote farm people began to whisper of madness in both daughter and mother.

Every species of rustic divination which the Welsh peasant girl resorts to for ascertaining the future—a lover's visit, or a lover's secret heart,—did this poor enthusiastic girl practise, to penetrate a darker secret and more desired return—the return of a father—the secret of his life or death.

Perhaps her own strange loneliness made her anxiety less wholly on her mother's account than it might appear. The apathy of grief long borne, and the abstraction of one living

on memory alone, and the busy thinkings of a despair that could not rest in a mourning for the *certain* dead — all these had rendered Alice anything but a *fondling* mother. To all the child's wants she attended as a duty, and was too soft of heart to deny any of the few means of amusement—but she seemed to utterly *forget* all maternal blandishments. It appeared as if the disappointment of her eager longing to present the beautiful babe to her husband, had shut up all her affections towards it, and that she regarded her as some wayward child does a toy when broken, whose useless parts still glitter, but, *as* useless, only add to its vexation by their beauty to the mere eye, since its purpose is no more. She looked drearily into the humid crystal of the young girl's most feeling and all-expressing eye, even as that child looks with discontent at the bubble-sphere it has blown from soap when the day is all cloud, and it wants the sun behind to burnish it with all the lines of the rainbow, and the crystalline sky-blue for its background, against which to mount so beautifully! The beauteous rising of the girl into the bloom of her age so was saddened, and so was disappointing to the mother's mourning eye, for want of that other parent eye, which

was, indeed, to Alice her only blue heaven, and the love that lit it up, her life's only sun. One only associate beside that mother the little girl had ever known, and him only for a few weeks,—a young boy named William Paull, nephew to Marmaduke, who went to sea very young, and had seen her since but rarely.

It was, perhaps, a misfortune that Alice Woolstoncraft had gained, by the bequest of her first husband,—that old man to whom her parents had sold her in marriage for his wealth, (*rustic* wealth, at least,) a competence, or what nearly spared her all exertions. It was the dear price of her youthful happiness, and, indeed, her after-peace; for it was the prior revolted and loveless state of her passions, in such a woman, bound to an infirm and brutal clown, which, no doubt, gave such intensity to her feelings when their proper object was found, though too late for perfect bliss of wedlock without disparity. This competence encouraged that listlessness natural to deep grief, by the want of all spur to exertions.

There was something in that solitary scene of severe and simple grandeur—a naked, stern, and melancholy magnificence, which (to assimilate the physical in landscape, and the imaginative in moral sentiment,) might be fancifully compared to the ancient Greek Tragedy. Na-

ture was all in all, and her features had no smile. Let us sketch an evening view of it. A dun-green marsh, rushy, dry, with a few crags peeping pale through its treeless nakedness, formed the foreground. One or two monastic ruins *of ruins,* the mere wreck of what have been picturesque relics, are dimly visible. Before was the open sea, with all its sounds, and all its waves sunken into one mighty moaning, and one restless floor—and the sea-sky, with all its clouds clustering in purple but lurid pomps round the great sun, on the horizon's edge. On one hand the pyramidal headland of the Great Orme's Head, on the other that of the Lesser Orme's, stood like huge towers, reared by giants, to sentinel eternally the majestic pass or gorge they form of that marshland, with its few tomb-like colossal stones and prostrate ruins. The only sound was that immense one of the deep, made more awful by the reverberation of the whole body of the mountain of the Great Orme's Head, which gave a distinct peal and roll in addition to the breaking thunder of the sea.

In such a naked vast of prospect, whole families and all their homes would hardly have relieved that solitude. Dwarfed into moving figures, and their houses into beaver huts or molehills, under that mighty bulk and its

shadow, and beside that illimitable dome and its floor, they would have rather added to the solemnity. Much less did that one figure relieve it, which this evening, placed just in apposition with the now tempered glory of the sinking sun's dilated globe, gave to the eye it intercepted, (like some figured spot in its disk,) the doubtful image of a human form, diminished to a mere dust atom. If the romance of the image was destroyed on approach, by the discovery that this imagined "angel in the sun" was no other than our Ruth, a Welsh cottage girl reclining on a knoll of rock, with dry sea-weed for a pillow, her raven hair flying in wild grace, with some touch of a poetic fire in that eye, albeit a humble stocking from her mother's few sheep's wool, was growing on the knitting-needles in her hand, which her taper fingers plied rapidly, without a moment diverting her attention from the dim speck in the distance that she fancied into a sail—(yes! a *father's* sail even yet!) I say, whatever the scene lost in the illusion of romance, it gained in interest, actual living interest. It is an advantage of this general occupation of our Welsh house-wives and children, knitting, that it goes on mechanically, without withdrawing the mind, or eye, or limbs from any other pursuit; the two hands only keep

producing the useful commodity, leaving the mothers to walk, fetch cows, talk, and quarrel, the young to go errands, to learn reading, &c. quite as if no stockings were on the stocks. Then it is so clean a task! the slender needles so bright, and the growing clean woollen affair so needful!

It was on this evening of melancholy splendour, which we have been describing, thus sleeping in lurid crimson along the grand sort of inverted arch of mighty span, formed by the two great headlands, that Ruth was hastily summoned home by a neighbour. She ran like a wild fawn, her stockings and part of her attire left on the rock slab; she ran—and found her mother dying; who collecting her little breath, addressed her with a smile, after kissing away her incessant tears. Poor Ruth had rarely known the touch of those mother-lips; and now they were blueish, and ghastly, and her eyes told that the hand of death was already advanced between her and that parent. All return of tenderness had formerly been confined to the sad woman's heart; she had no more the zest, no longer the active spirit of even maternal love, enough alive within her to give kiss for kiss, endearment for endearment. Now she kissed and clasped her fervently, then said:

"I must leave you, poor child! I feel myself going, going where I trust my Marmaduke is long ago gone before me."

"Oh no! my mother," poor Ruth broke forth, sobbing, "he is *not* gone, *live* for him! live, and he will come again! We will light our fire again every dark nightfall. Don't say *he's* gone, and *you* are going, or I shall die *before* you! don't *both* leave me, pray don't! oh dear! oh my heart!" and she held her side, where it seemed bursting from her bosom.

"Good, dear girl," the faint woman pursued, "though you think me unhappy in quitting life, and though folks talk of dying as if it were to fall asleep, and it were a *dreadful* sleep, indeed, my dear, it's to *me* nothing dreadful, but just like a waking. My *life* has been the sleep, God knows! My *life* has been the dream, and Heaven forgive me for making your's the same, poor child! but *you've* a life yet to come, I do hope; yet I'd rather see you dead now than that it should be *such* a life as it has pleased God to send me. I fear me it's a crime to love as I've done; I'm sure it has cast me down into such despair, as must be wicked, if we have any heart left to fight against it: but what can a broken heart do? *Now* I see that I should have turned my eyes that

couldn't sleep, and my heart that was never at peace, and my arms that were ever ready to do a desperate something, oh! *not* to that deaf sea, *not* to that empty distance, not to a foolish false figure on my brain, of my Marmaduke, my *dear!* rocking on a masthead—oh no! but to the God that I almost grew wrath against for dividing us! Oh, and *was* not my God merciless to me to give the uttermost I ever could wish for, in the way of passionate love, only to take it away directly? *only* to take him away? Never could I, never *did* I say, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord!" Therefore perhaps he refused me my dear Marmaduke back to these arms.—But I must be short."—Then she waited till the neighbour who had fetched Ruth was gone, and at last said, trembling all over—"My poor poor Ruth! Yet *not mine*—"

"Not *yours*, my mother? Not yours? Well-a-day! she's moythering,* oh! let me fetch the woman back."

"Stay, be quiet, child; you are now sixteen years old, I must not die in falsehood.—Ah! you 'll hate me and the memory of me *now*. But what's love and what's hate to *me*, but only Marmaduke's? *I am not your mother.*"

* "Moythering," delirious talking.

Ruth rolled her eyes in bewilderment, through tears, turning death-pale, and muttering "*Not my mother?*"

"Hear me, my poor child! I had prayed to God to permit me to hold but one image of my Marmaduke, and He would not! I envied the most destitute of mothers only for that they were *mothers!* I watched the soft eyes of my Marmaduke, and thought how they would look *at* me, *on* me, if——Oh I shall live again, to go mad! I shall rouse myself from this death, that I'm as glad of as a poor creature long at sea is of land, if I begin to *remember* again, to feel afresh, and flutter all over again! I *was* mad, Ruth. My longing to meet him *with an infant*, when he wrote to me about his coming back, drove me into a scheme for deceiving him. But never did he come back to be deceived! but *my* guilt was the same. I began to act my plot and when that other woman's time of trouble came, by the aid of her nurse, we contrived to make it believed her child was still-born, and long before its time, while the old woman brought *you (you* were the child) and nursed me in my pretended lying-in. This old midwife never betrayed our plot, and oh! how I doated on you, for nothing but the promise your little helpless body afforded me of becoming *all* to

my dear husband, which other wives are to theirs! I tried to dream awake that you *was my* own. How soon I taught you to say 'Dad, dad!' I'm sure I trembled at thought of losing you, so as never *mother* did. But when you grew so pretty and grew to prattle so, and one trick came after another, that I so wanted *him* to see, all came, but *he* never came, he never saw them, and one by one was forgot; when your little teeth shewed, and you began to go alone, and *he* never watched these things *with* me; oh then, I began not to care for you, poor darling! for *then* I cared for nothing; and so, you know, you've grown and grown to a great girl, a *woman!* ha! ha! ha! yes, *you're* a fine woman-figure now! and what am *I?* An old withered one, a wicked one! But what matters? *he'll* never see me so, God wouldn't let him be deceived; God punished me, for never, never, never more did Marmaduke come back! But mind, I charge you Ruth, I *implore* it, my dear, if he *do* come back, *don't tell him,* don't make me out a liar to *him!* Swear you won't expose me! Let him *pity* me, let him come and plant my grave! Oh, Ruth!"

"I swear I never will, my dear, dear mother!" Ruth sobbed distractedly. With one finger raised towards Heaven, and the poor girl's face

on her panting bosom, Alice sunk back; and when Ruth, alarmed, raised her tearful face to answer her more audibly, the dreadful eyes were fixed upon hers, never to be veiled by those moveless lids again, but by another's hand.

CHAPTER II.

Now is there one to whom I can express
My nature's weakness, and my soul's distress.
CRABBE.

ALMOST every person has met with coincidences of events that would in fiction be pronounced too improbable for belief. Of this, what is recorded to have occurred to the humble persons of this traditionary tale, to be immediately mentioned, is an instance. On the death of "Alice, the Broken Heart," the woman who attended to perform the last duties to the dead, and protect the forsaken girl, (confounded into transient delirium by the discovery just made, and the appalling stroke of death, so instantly succeeding,) brought out, according to Welsh custom, the straw which formed part of the bed-furniture of the deceased, and set it on fire before the cottage door. This was designed as a signal of death formerly in Wales, and practised as soon as the breath had left the body. Those masses of cloud which deepening round the departure of the sun, had invested that eventful evening with a melancholy gloom

of glory, had now deepened into darkness, and lowered, (like a roof of blackness over some vault of the dead, invaded by one torch, or a sickly lamp)—over the scene, now given to the view of those watching the dead, by that solemn though feeble beacon, gleaming its short-lived tale of death to the few eyes that might be turned from land or from sea, towards the foot of the Orme's Head mountain, under which lurked the home of the now solitary orphan.

The Gwylnôs, or "night of watching," which succeeded this grim nightfall, was one of storm and darkness. It may here be not impertinent to remark that the practice of *watching* a corpse did not in Wales wholly originate in friendship, and exist as a mere form, but was the result of superstition, which apprehended mischief, if not abduction, likely to be practised on the dead, by evil spirits or witches, if strict watch were not kept, and a light always burned.

The wild imaginative character which her mode of life had formed in the solitary girl, Ruth, gave impulse to her nerves, and a spirit bold beyond the weakness of her sex and age, on exciting occasions. She entreated to be the sole watcher by her lost protector. The howling and rising wind almost extinguished the two rushes, dipped in grease, which, fixed each

in the small iron vice used to bear them about, stood on each side of the sheeted corpse; the cottage shook violently, the echoes of the tremendous falls of the broad sea's sweep lashing the rock beach on the seaward side of the Great Orme, were like thunderclaps run into one another; and the real thunder of the sky, (shut up by clouds as by mighty folding doors hung with mourning,) already came groaning from the distance, and the blueness of the lightning made itself seen within the room, spite of the light within; yet Ruth persevered in her desire to watch alone, to have that last sad office all her own, and the women retired to rest, not in the house, but according to common usage even at this day with the farmer's servants in retired pastoral districts, in summer at least, to a night's rest in the straw of the cowhouse, all the older farm houses accommodating their cattle under the same roof with the family, only divided by a wall of rough stones.

The dead of night was now on the world, or rather, in such solitude, on two mountains, their double-figured blackness frowning out sudden in the quiver of lightning, with its ghastly *day* of a moment; a sea running mountain high; a sea-lashed dismal beach; and an upward cataract of spray, that mounted halfway up the face of

the Orme's Head precipice next the waves, and volatile as it had flown *up* on the wind's wing, of steady force, as it blew a settled hurricane, in falling thundered like whole waves that had ridden air and broken against that wall of crags, rather than the mere foam of that wave's raging. The stir and uproar of the elements without strangely contrasted with the everlasting peace and the never-to-be-broken silence of the mortality within. That form, so lately agitated as those elements, so lately, even to the last, trembling with the last convulsions of the most powerful of the passions, the earthquake of the heart—now lay still as a summer night, when scarce a moth is heard flitting, a dull shape frightfully hinting its nature, by projecting features of face and limb, beneath a sheet, the necessary veil between its metamorphosed self and its, so recently, fellow-beings, —a perishing image of clay; and all those elements of being,—those hopes, fears, wraths, regrets, dotings, jealousies, which had raged within that little vault of a bosom, as do thunder, lightning, wind, and hail, in that of our visible heaven—all, all sunken into peace, and no more left of the yearnings, the rapid outstretchings of the busy spirit, than remains of its eager insect-hunting, and its flight out-

stripping our sight, to the winter-stricken bat, when it steals away to a ruinous tomb, damp cleft in rock, or the depth of some dungeon in a tower's ruin, and there hangs, with hundreds more of its race, so stricken, a dull mass to be handled without their feeling the hand, not a wing stirred of so many swift ones, a mere black appendage to such vault!

Ruth, full of awful and sad thoughts, thus ruminated:—"And I shall be some time—I care not were it now—like this dear, solemn—something—Oh, is it possible? is this *not* my *mother's* corpse?—yes, I *will* call it so—like *you,* my mother, as now you are. Why should I fear to raise the sheet? She loved me, as well as her poor distracted heart could love any thing, dear soul! she never hurt me while living—why now?—Yet I fear.—Like what you *are* I shall be—shall I ever be like what *you have been?* Oh, I can feel what you have felt, even by what I, a foolish child, feel towards a father I never knew. Ah, my God! what a new world I have come into since this morning's sun rose on me! My dear father beyond that sea is *not* my father—I've been dreaming of a stranger! I've watched and wept, and lit up my little watch fire, and thrown my silly arms in my sleep, and dreamed I was sleeping

on his bosom, and he's *not* my father! *He* is not? *Who* is not? Oh mother, mother, you've made my mind like this storm, and left me alone, directly! Why do I say '*Mother?*' What a confusion! I have no fear of storm, or your poor pale death-look, or any thing, for I wish I were like you!—How it howls! Was that the wind?"

It was not the wind. She approached the casement, and screamed at sight of a human face, very pale, laid close to the panes, and then two hands, lain open all about them, as of one groping in blindness. It was a shipwrecked man, who, having by miracle saved himself by scrambling along a ledge of the rocks, in the retrocession of the waves, and clinging, during their assault, had groped his way round to the land side of the Great Orme's Head, and directed perhaps by voices to the house of death, was now seeking the entrance. After her first surprise, Ruth did not forget her nature so far as to delay the dues of hospitality towards the drenched, exhausted man, violently as her heart beat and limbs trembled. She opened the door, but the wrecked man was turning the contrary way, and she found that he was blind, in addition to his other calamities. Weatherbeaten, with hands wounded and

bleeding with the sharp rocks he had held by, and his face smeared with the blood his hands had left there in throwing back his black hair, that flew over his face in profusion, blown by the wind; his voice shrill and piteous; his whole appearance was terrific as a spectre, and his feeble groping in darkness, added to its piteous horror. Ruth shuddered at taking his hand as humanity prompted, yet, looking in his face, was surprised to catch a glimpse of two of the finest eyes that ever rolled, notwithstanding their loss of sight. Lightning had so far paralysed the optic nerve, as to nearly destroy its function, without destroying that mysterious power in the organ, by which it converses with other eyes, in the universal language peculiar to the human eye. She led him by his clay-like hand to the fire, proposing to there leave him while she roused the women in the cow-house, when a dreadful embarrassment detained her, about explaining to him the melancholy task she was engaged in, for the apartment was small, and with his groping to the least distance he would grasp the dead. She told him distractedly the situation, and ran to call up the women.

And there lay that impassioned, long-agitated being who had dreamed and groaned out

life (a cold automaton with breath) for the sake of that dear one, *now*, in that extraordinary moment, by such awful coincidence, returned to her *clay* not to her, not to her warm heart leaping towards him, nor her arms that would have so grasped him! She lay, and not a pulse stirred at his presence, not a hand was extended to his helplessness, as he felt about, nor one sigh was left for the dear, dearest Marmaduke, the long-lost husband, shivering and bleeding, a shipwrecked man, and the heaven and the earth blotted to him, for ever! Such are human hopes, passions, prospects, and such and so terrific in its change, is death! He was returned, but only as earth was opening for the white ashes that alone remained of so mighty a flame, as had consumed a heart, and made it dust even before it ceased to palpitate, antedating the work of death itself.

You, whoever you are, 'nay *you*, this weak agitated *self*, now plying this vain task of painting passion in perishable pictures like this,' read here the vanity of human wishes! Perhaps there is one heart, perhaps there are arms which you are or were secretly considering your future pillow, your future sure white sanctuary from the last fury of that pursuing terror Death, now almost upon you, already parleying with

Nature, for your forfeit body, and that Nature but pleading faintly for a little grace, a little more time—not happiness. Perhaps you have *tried* that heart even by unkindness, and it withstood the trial; those arms have been slighted in the insolence of self-dependent health and strength; perhaps mutual faults have almost made love a stranger in such hours, though not departed, still your secret weakness has been buoyed by a sleeping confidence that yours are that heart, and yours those arms *at need.* Trust not in that hope! So Alice hoped, and there she died *lonely!* (to *her* there was but *one* being that made earth populous.) The sea was *her* vicegerent Death, that tore her heart alive:—but as terrible bafflers of human hopes as that sea, lurk by thousands round us all. *She* prayed, she panted for that man's return; he returned, but in vain *to her.* You rest your whole hope against a death of despair, on tried affection, on purity, on something human. It shall deceive you! If not a confidence built on *Heaven,* trust it not! Wrecked, not on one voyage but the sea of *life,* when life's prospect is one blot, when not hands but heart shall lie all bleeding with the sharp rocks of *that* sea—then that something, not of Heaven, in which was your trust, shall fail you at the eleventh hour! fail

you when in the shadow of the valley of death! and that heart, that mind, and those arms prove no more yours, and fruitless to you in your lone struggle with death, as were those stiff arms of Alice, or her congealed heart, to that wrecked, blind, bleeding, and desolate man!

An unseasonable contemplation!

The mournful beacon formed of the flaming death-bed of the ill-fated Alice, had effected the purpose for which she had herself, for so long a time, kindled fires in vain. The seamen of the vessel which Marmaduke was on board, were led by that little light to make for the shallow bay formed by the two Orme's Heads, but which they missed through the fury of the gale, and drove on the Head itself.

Some time elapsed before the fact of this extraordinary meeting with his supposed daughter became known to Marmaduke. For the women, with the light of morning, led him away to a farm at some distance, and Ruth had small impulse to converse during the night. Moreover, he was unacquainted with the Welsh tongue, in which the women conversed. But Ruth, sitting melancholy with eyes fixed on the fire, after supplying the stranger's wants, had time indifferently to observe that he was a young-looking man; his age was indeed such,

he having married so early as would alone have removed any thought, if she had indulged such, of this man's being her father—the father of her *imagination* being old and venerable to her mind's eye. The blindness not being total, left expression in the wayworn man's ruined orbs, to second the thanks for the young woman's anxious attentions, which his words not inelegantly expressed.

Strange and powerful were the many emotions of this young girl's mind, when, after some time, the women led back the eager stranger to her—to her arms, as her long-lost father! The strong dying injunction of her whom alone she had known as a mother, acted with the force of a vow on her mind and conscience. Indeed, so linked were Marmaduke Paull and her unseen father together, in her whole life's thinking, that the two images were inseparable—and she embraced him with all the answering innocent fervour of the fondest daughter.

That in the very hour of her becoming motherless, she had found a father, was so like the interposition of heaven, that her solemn enthusiasm could not bear to part with so sweet an illusion, or confess it was one; she would fain persuade herself that her foster-mother had

talked deliriously; the tenderness of her nature concurred with filial respect to so solemn a prayer, to make her almost set aside the sad idea that *neither* of those she could so love was her parent; yet, after indulging this feeling till she laid her head on the shoulder of the deceived man (who, in his old longing for female offspring, and this its gratification, seemed comforted under the melancholy fate of his wife of a few months), in her fatigue or fondness, or both—a painful vague sense of impropriety already sprung up in her delicate mind, and she raised it again. But in the present hurry and confounding of all long preconceived ideas of her parentage, nothing was consistent in her conduct or sentiments. It was a strange, new, hurlyburly of great changes — death, burial, pity, wonder—and till long after the funeral, till after her father (as we shall call him, he being such to her feeling and to his imagination,) had arranged matters to reside with her and an old woman who had previously tended her few sheep and cows for Alice, Ruth might almost be said to have led a life of suspended animation. All was as a troubled dream, not without some dark overshadowings from the future, of perplexity, confusion, and conflicting feelings to come.

CHAPTER III.

Yes—I am shattered—I have service seen—
And service done—I have in troubles been—
And the brown buff is o'er my features spread. CRABBE.

MANY and long were the stories that the seafaring man had to tell to Ruth, of his long absence. So great, on her foster-mother's account, was her interest in his far voyages and perils (mournful as was that interest), that Ruth could listen to nothing else, while leading him to spots where the sun shone warmly, or where some object he might remember, a ruin or a peak, was half visible to his imperfect sight. But when the novelty of such companionship was past—delightful novelty to so long lonely a girl, with so warm and social a nature!—as such companionship began to increase even a father's fondness toward her, his new found darling, his soft inquiring tender friend, and still more, the watchful guide of his faltering steps; then it was that the full sense of her most strange and embarrassing predicament, rushed on her mind, robbed her of sweet sleep, plunged her in reverie without end, and influenced

her actions toward him. When a sense of delicacy, an artificial, a *reasoning* delicacy, founded on the dying words of her foster-mother, made her constrained and cold on a sudden, the change was so instantly felt by the solitary man, full of the father, that some explanation was required on the instant, and as none could be given, the pained girl (pained by paining him) could only relieve him by renewing that manner of innocent blandishment which was natural between father and child. Yet she saw that this must have an end. Not that she could not, of her own pure nature, have happily allowed his circling arm, or met his lips in the parting kiss at night, without her modesty taking the least alarm; it was but through the conventional strictness of forms, that this *reasoning* bashfulness was at all alarmed. She wished she could forget her mother's words; she wept all night to think he was *not* her father; she thought him (except for weather and a few furrows of thought in the brow) the very being her foster-mother had so often painted, —gentle of eye, pensive, sensible, of noble forehead and presence, a strong mind and feeling heart. In examining unobserved, as she could do, his features, she would gaze till her own eyes swam in tears at the beauty of his, affected

with the thought of such eyes having lost the light of heaven. Yet she almost indulged a share of selfish pleasure that this privation would attach him to *her* by a sort of necessity, so that she would never be fatherless again. When an idle pang crossed her mind, in thinking how poor Alice would almost have been jealous of her office of leading him, were she alive, she quickly removed it by recalling forcibly to her mind the fact that she was *not* the daughter of Alice—the vague repulsive idea of a moment, that of her thus rivalling a mother, though in the most innocent way, was thus overcome, for Alice was to her but a stranger in blood. *Both* were strangers in blood. Yet Ruth rarely thought of or sighed for her real father unknown. An ideal one had been so long assigned her, that now, while that one was become impersonated before her, there was room in neither her heart nor her mind for another. Yet, while she looked at this object as one come back from the dead, and recalled the long portion of her little life, throughout which he had been to her as some gracious being of some unknown state of existence, to be reverenced and mourned, rather than expected, she felt a confusing contrast between that venerated shadow and the actual person

of a father,—that, spiritualized by distance, and almost certain death; this, a palpable blessing, a smiling, conversing, tender helpmate (for time had familiarized to him the horror of blindness, and light was not quite shut out) who made her *feel*, for the first time, her womanhood—her own capability of pleasing and being pleased—which the dismal taciturnity of love-melancholy in her former ill-fated companion had never elicited. She could not help often wishing that her dream of the parent figure, vague as it was, had been less violently broken —that Marmaduke had been older, even sterner, less inclined to be gentle to her gentleness and almost submissive to her childish will.

One fact she was surprised and pained to learn, from hints dropped, and general tone of discourse about his wife, that the unhappy woman's passion had been scarcely returned—that pity and that *degree* of return which a generous nature cannot refuse to love so unbounded, devoted as hers, had lulled her into full content; but that his heart had even been engaged, when his extreme youth, and that generosity of grateful pity, induced him to become her husband; and Ruth would go to bed early, on purpose to think in silence and seclusion on that long misery of her foster-

mother, whom she never pitied, from her heart's depth, so painfully before. And now that she found what uncertainty hangs over hearts and loves and fates, she found food for new and bitter thoughts, grew melancholy, and wept for more than Alice, in ostensibly weeping for her error and her fate.

Marmaduke Paull had that indolent sort of temperament which may be often observed in the enthusiastic character, especially in the sphere of the passions. His time on shipboard had not been one of robust labour, but occupied in keeping purser's accompts, he being what the rustic folk called a "scholar," and he had indeed made proficiency enough to attain lucrative employment in the Service, before the loss of his sight by lightning. His whole feelings had been early averse from a sea life; but the influence of an uncle, a lieutenant, having led him abroad, he became afterwards liable to impressment, as has been said. But not all the years sacrificed to the sea, had estranged his rather melancholic mind from the pensive charms of the land, especially those of his native land, and its delicious landscapes along the banks of the Conwy river, where he was born, between the towns of Conwy and Llanrwst. The loss of sight could not quite obli-

terate those charms. The lowing of cattle, the brawling of the shallows where he used to fish when a boy, the air scented with the bog-myrtle, the wild thyme, or whatever peculiar vegetable growth distinguished any favourite mountain haunt of his, still remained the same, to whisper (if mournfully, still sweetly) to his imagination, of the thickly greened roof of the cottage, the mounting supper-smoke of the inmates,—the glorified July evening sky, the beautiful west,—the meadows all flowers,—of all that, he, standing in the old spot, could no more see. And thus while the same sweet scents, the same cuckoo, the same smell of greenwood smoke, the same deep calm, and soft singing of birds, addressed his remaining senses—in such spots he found regret for the one sense lost, far less bitter than in any other. Hence, having considerable resources, partly from his bachelor uncle, partly from his deceased wife, Marmaduke soon resolved to abandon the melancholy house of the Orme's Head promontory, and, having done so, obtained the very farmhouse in which he was born, near the river Conwy, in the most truly pastoral, rich, and romantic vale of that name.

And had he abandoned all view of the solace of wedlock, notwithstanding his impassioned

character? The father had enlisted all the feelings of his nature in its own pure cause. The desire of a daughter had been strong in his heart from the first, in common with most parental hearts, of somewhat feminine bias towards tenderness and fondness. The helplessness of the female offspring seems to promise a sort of perpetual infancy, or rather the dependence of infancy. Marmaduke found this boyish desire now fulfilled. He had a daughter, a sweet and gentle one. We omitted to record the long illness which the bruised and disfigured shipwrecked man suffered; a fever of the nerves increased to a species of dangerous typhus, probably by the shock and melancholy of the death and burial of a wife, whom, if he had not actually loved, he had esteemed and was most grateful to, for the intense love she bore to him, and now pitied to agony. The idea of his having returned just in time to take the dead hand of this dear friend, and yet too late to feel its rapturous pressure,—to see her faded corpse, but not to be ever more seen by the eyes his presence would have delighted,—(blind, battered, and altered even as he was)—almost beyond that of an angel come in all the beauty of heaven,—this idea was an affecting, a tragical one. Friendship wrought in his

heart, with a tragic force equal to that of love. Nothing could have soothed that poignant agony so speedily, but the constant watch and the soft weeping tones and tender touch of the being who stepped in to fill the black void in his affections; that novelty of sweet relation—*daughter*—above all the daughter—as he believed—of that lost dear friend, whom he missed with more of a filial than conjugal pain of separation.

It is not unusually seen, that the indolent temperaments, such as I have assigned to the returned seaman, carry about passions of violent character,—sleeping as it were, awaiting like a mine of gunpowder the accident which is to be as the inflaming spark,—and carry even (often) to the grave, from this accident never occurring, —from this spark never happening to kindle the sullen material of combustion. This indolence now prevailed with Marmaduke Paull; and induced him to forego, for life, every thought of warmer passions, for the sake of that novel calm delicious one—a father's love. To this, doubtless, the pensive gloom of blindness contributed. His adventures (for he had passed through many), his early marriage,—the weariness of nerves much tried, and lastly his loss of sight,—all these made his life

seem a long one, already past. He counted by events, rather than years, (his neglected figure even led others, casual observers—to begin to call him the "old blind man,") and thus felt disposed to *rest* in this placid port of the passions of manhood—the love of his child,—resigning all more tumultuous hopes for its sake. As an ambitious adventurer bound on a voyage of discovery, after suffering many hardships, and almost losing hope of making the land of promise, puts in at some smiling country's bay, and, while anchoring there in a calm, and lulled by the songs, the voices, the quietude, of shepherd-haunts, peeping embosomed in its hills, the gambols of lambs, and blue and green glimpsing of waters and fields, laughing open to a cloudless sky—almost forgets that he ever panted for any prouder land than that lowly, lovely one; and seems as happy to set his foot on its soft sod, and gather a simple, sweet flower there, after all the briny barrenness of his sea way, as he could be in planting the standard of his king on the country of his ambitious search, and even culling some precious ore which he might find there. For a time he *is* as happy. Thus did Marmaduke feel himself "shut up in measureless content," while living with, and living for, his new-found

daughter—thus did he resign, for the pleasure her affection gave him, and the charming cheering innocence of her every endearment, and her ceaseless efforts to amuse him—all higher ambition of the heart.

Ruth was desired one day to lead him to the town of his earliest knowledge, Conwy, for a "raking up" as he said of "old friends."

"How I *know* the sound of the shiver of that ivy, over my head! I could almost tell you which of the old towers we're under now," said the father, as they sate on a boat lying keel upward, under the wall of the noble castle every where exhibiting a hanging wood of various coloured ivy. Before them the blue estuary of the river with its little fishing-boats, lay sunny the great sea on one hand, with all the peaks and headlands of the bay, the narrowing river banks contrasting to that sea's vast, their own rich verdure and cattle, and white farms, in mountain-perspective, on the other. The town's people, and the few sailors from other parts, and children catching crabs at low water, diversified the scene close before them, all looking lively, even to the mournful *old* themselves, as they leaned on rusty anchors, or sate still on ruinous boats rotting there, in the broad, brilliant, gay

expanse of sunny sand, sunny blue waters, and sunny golden green grass of the valley, in which, or against which, as a background, all these objects lay basking, or stirred feebly, or busied themselves, or rested statue-like.

"Now look out an *old* man, my love, and stop him as he goes by, that I may ask him about old times."

Ruth stopped several even *old* men in vain. At last came one who *had* lived all his life in Conwy, and they fell into conversation.

"And what's become of that good kind fellow, that got into trouble by resisting the press-gang, when they took me, and poor dear Alice fought two of them, and he took her part?"

"Ned Gwillim, wasn't his name? I remember him very well. Why, he got drunk that night, and made up his quarrel about *you*, and enlisted himself in the Marines; and a sad dog he turned out—he was hanged for piracy, they do say. Aye, his taking your part, by getting acquainted with that gang, was the first of his going wrong. I heard his father say (for he and I are kin)—he was one of a press-gang himself after that, and one of the hard-heartedest too."

"And do you know Griffy Pugh — poor Griffy! He kept a rope walk—he was a good friend to me—I must call on him"—

"Oh, *I* know Griffy Pugh, father," Ruth interposed: "he's just married."

"Married *again*, then?"

"No."

"Yes! I mean old Pugh's (the smuggler's) son, and *he* had a wife and a son, I'm sure, before I was pressed."

"Oh, but it's that son your daughter means, who is just married; they call your friend Griffy 'old' Pugh now—the old grandfather's been dead long—"

"What!" said Marmaduke, "that little chap I used to carry on my back, and buy farthing cakes for, *married?* Aye, to be sure! he *must* be a man by this time; I'd forgot the years—"

Many an inquiry of such kind having been met by some chilling reply, relating change, reverse, or death, in his old intimates, Marmaduke said, "Well, my dear, I think there's nobody left in Conwy that it's worth my going into the town to see. Faith! even lead me, love, to the old tumbled-down tower on the south side of the castle walls. I used to often loiter, and lean on it, as it lies, with the huge hanging ruin of the undermined upper part, above my head—I warrant I shall find *that* the same, and in the same place. Every body and every thing else seems as changed as I am. I

heard a man ask just now, 'who is that *old* blind man?' and another answered, 'some *stranger*'—and yet I'm not forty years old, and I was born not six miles off!"

"But you don't *look* old," said Ruth, "only *very* brown and weather-beat—indeed, I think you look the handsomer for that! When I used to dream of your being come back, long ago, I always saw you with white hair, and *such* a beard! and dreamt I knelt down, and you blest me with an old shrivelled hand on my head, just like a picture of Moses—and now, when I play with you, and you with me, and I see your fine black hair, and those eyes —it is so funny!—such a *disappointment* almost —yet not *that* neither! I don't know *how* it is! only I don't seem to have *found* my father when I *have* found him. Good God! what am I saying?" And she gently withdrew herself from his parental fondness of action, he having taken her on his lap, as she talked.

A young man of modest deportment, in sailor's dress, just then caught the sighing girl's eye, who exclaimed, "Fy, Annwyll! here's cousin William come home, and grown quite into a man!" This youth, a son of a deceased brother of Marmaduke, was the boy who had for a short time played with Ruth in her infancy,

and now and then been her companion since, in some of her rambles, prior to her protector's death, not without a tender sentiment—hardly divulged, yet not wholly secreted—having sprung between them. A long voyage, and long absence, had at least suspended this incipient passion in both, whether or no it had suppressed it remains to be seen.

"Good Lord! how years fly," said the blind uncle, as he measured with his raised left hand the height of the unseen youth, who cordially held his right; "and is *this, can* this be 'the baby?' poor brother Hugh's last baby, that was born after he died? William is his name?—A fine tall fellow thou art, nephew William! I wonder if he's like brother Hugh.—A good bit of prize money Hugh once *had*, I know; did he leave much?"

"Yes, uncle; I'm to have a fortune, they say, when I come to be twenty-three; but my old guardian won't let me know how much."

"You'll come often and see us, won't you, William?" said Ruth; "we live now at Pont Porthlwyd, the old house as ye go to Llanwrst, but we haven't given up quite the house and farm at Llanduddno."

"Yes, cousin Ruth, sister and I shall often run over to you from the town. Good bye."

"A few years older than you, my love, isn't that lad?" Marmaduke inquired; "but I ask *you*, when I know better myself; he was a child in arms a year or two before I was pressed—a very nice spoken pleasant youth, indeed!" And he called him back to second Ruth's invitation to their home, which he promptly accepted, again shaking his new found uncle's hand.

"And pray, daddy," (it is thus *rustic* Welsh maidens of every age address a father,) "pray, daddy, why do you want old friends now you've got *me*?" Ruth said playfully.

"To tell'em I *have* got you, my saucy sweet one," said he, kissing her; "I want *somebody* to show my pretty prize to."

For some time this affectionate girl's heart, in which the love and longing of a daughter towards a visionary father had wrought so long its singular effect, sunk, as it were into an intoxicated sleep. The power of self-delusion was never more manifested. She indulged a waking dream, strong as reality, that this was her actual father. She hardly indulged one thought towards the unknown real authors of her being, still regarding even her, who dying disclaimed her, as her mother. While this strong fancy remained, the change in herself

was even externally striking. That dreamy, listless, over-sensitive look and whole manner, which allied the wild-dressed, self-dependent, solitary girl of the Orme's Head downs and rocks to the characters of romance, was now changed into the more natural, if more homely character of a happy, healthy, though delicate farmer's daughter, who, instead of lying on sea weed and rock, rolling those expressive eyes round a dim horizon of hazy sea, in search of a visionary father's sail, now cast them round a gentler home-horizon of sheep walk, to view the flocks whitening there, (the new property of Marmaduke), or seated on her humble milking stool, in some recess of those green meadows on the Conwy's side, where the evening sun's low beams slept sweetly, would milk as many ewes as the stoutest, while the blind man, sitting on some oak root, thickly mossed, or a bank of the rocky brook that came down foaming into the Conwy, would amuse her by relating the modes of farming life, and of dairy keeping in distant lands.

It was during this strange but happy forgetfulness on her part, that the visits of her handsome cousin William grew frequent, his attentions of a kind not to be misunderstood, the talk of his sister Sophy explicitly tending

to the view of courtship on his part—and not long after that a sudden and total change came over her thought and feeling on the subject of her strange situation. The necessity of telling the truth to Marmaduke, and the pain of so doing, grew hourly upon her. Her cheek would burn with blushes, not such as she had been used to feel, whenever his parental fondness urged him to the pure, fond endearments of a father. Her eyes would shrink down from his sightless ones, and remain fixed on the ground in an innocent shame for the deceit it seemed almost her doom to practise, on one so fond, so helpless, so much needing a daughter, so likely to feel acutely the bitter disappointment of having a darling hope and feeling, for which he had resolved to resign all others, at so early a stage of life, thus harshly and eternally baffled and rooted out of his bosom! He had said to his own heart "I will live only for this sweet daughter—she shall be to me, friend, helpmate,—wife, mourner—everything! for her I will live and die a widower! No hand but Ruth's shall lead me; no hand but Ruth's be about my death-bed; or close these eyes, or plant my grave!" She could ill bear to break this dream by saying "*you have no daughter.*" She began to loathe food, lose

sleep, cheerfulness, colour, under this pressing occasion for divulging a secret that had grown by concealment only more grievous to be divulged. And her temper changed.

The young woman Sophy was astonished by the tart peremptoriness of her rejection of William's suit, even to the threatening to tell her father, should he persevere in it. This was the more strange, inasmuch as she had certainly formed a girlish early attachment to this youth. Nor did she exhibit the least aversion to him, in any light but that of a lover. Neither did she, perhaps, confess to herself, why she so anxiously secreted from Marmaduke the fact of William's overtures, for the uncle's opinion of him she knew to be favourable; but the feeling that she alone was fully conscious of, was the very natural and innocent one of extreme reluctance to resign, as a wife must do, the tender office of her father's guide.

CHAPTER IV.

Come, then, I woo thee, sacred Sleep!
Spirits of Ill! your distance keep—
And in your own dominions dwell,
Ye, the sad emigrants from hell!
Watch, dear seraphic beings round,
And these black enemies repel,
Safe be my soul, my slumber sound!

CRABBE—"*World of Dreams.*"

OH! I have had *such* a dream!" "Ruth said one morning, on meeting her fatherly protector, at the farmhouse door, just as the sun was rising, and the soft, dim, blue haze of the parting summer night, was seen curling like a steam, all along the course of the Conwy river, and growing all alight with the horizontal beams from across the grand expanse of sea, and all was still throughout the river-side, dales, copses, and flowery recesses between the whitening rocks. "I saw poor dear Alice."

"Your mother?" he interrupted her. "Aye, my *mother*—I saw her lying as she lay that dreadful night you came home—(blessed night for *that*, as it was)—I thought as I stood looking at her solemn face, through my tears, and

was stooping to kiss those poor lips, so shockingly formal, they came a little apart, and a slow smile seemed coming—but oh, what a smile! spiteful, scornful, sneering, bitter,—ghastly!—and her dead eyes half opened to leer at me, and oh, they were crueller than even the smile! Then a heaving of the shroud over her poor bosom, came on, and then a sound crept hollowly through her cold mouth, that at last made up a word—'*Rival! rival* me! *Me?*' And as it grew stronger, more words—furious ones came, and her ruffled arm started up—oh, father! sprung up and tore open her winding sheet at the breast, and I heard 'what if this breast did *not* give you suck? *dare* you wound this heart within it? Dare you torture it? *Rival* me?' Oh, I can't tell you how frightful it was to see dead and white lips sneer, and glassy fixed eyes stir again to bitterly curse one with a look!"

"That's a *wild* dream, in truth," Marmaduke replied. "Poor soul! her jealousy hardly would survive death; and to be jealous of her own child!—What could put such fancies into such an innocent little brain as my Ruth's, I wonder!—And *did* poor Alice not suckle you, my dear?" He missed the deeper meaning of these fancied words.—"And that was 'nt all.

I heard the same roaring as was all night then —but—oh, father !—the wildest winds that bellow among the sea caverns of Llanduddno rocks, that snap the trees rooted in the mountain stone off short, and pile the waves up like ruins tumbling about, all along the coast, were never like that in my dream, for that had a frightful human *voice!*—It was a terrible wind and a voice too, in one, a wild, threatening, furious, mad, maddening voice—for I ran mad to hear it when they told me that was my *mother's* voice—no—it was the 'Fury of the Great Orme's Head'—(what *is* a Fury? I've read of it, but forget—Something like a mad ghost that has a bloody whip, is'nt it?)—No matter—well! this voice of this Fury was my mother's turned into that thing! and go where I would—it raved behind me—off sea and off land, up from earth, and down from the clouds, and raging along the beach, and the mountain's side, everywhere that wind, or that voice of the wind followed me, a pale wretch, sometimes turning to ask mercy, sometimes lying flat on the earth, like as praying for my grave to let me in, from it, and the sound it made was, 'Ruth shall rue! Ruth shall rue! Ruth the wretch! Ruth the wretched!' "

"It's this melancholy life you lead with me, poor child! that gives you these wild dreams,"

Marmaduke said deeply musing. "To lead about a blind useless being from one sunny nook to another, is not a life for a beautiful young——"

She interrupted him eagerly—"*Melancholy?* —I should go melancholy mad, if any body *but* I led you so! And oh! do you think it possible that the dead—that Alice—my mother, I mean—*can* look down jealously on your being led by me, I mean by *any body* but her? I would be sore sorry to pain her poor ghost, if I knew it, and indeed I do fancy that if *I* were dying, I should cry bitterly when I was shewn the new girl, or the woman, or wife,—whatever it might be, who must take your Ruth's office—your forgotten Ruth's! So I can feel for *her*."—

"But you must marry, sweet—will your husband leave you to me, think you?" said he laughing.

"Never!—*Husband?*—I never will give one the power to part us! never while I live! Yet what do I talk?" And she sighed with almost the deep hollowness of groaning.

"And what was that deep sigh for?" he inquired. "I've remarked your tones of voice altered of late; how low they are, yet how softly sweet, and how mournful! What is the matter, my own?—Gone!"

Ruth had vanished at the moment of his putting this question.

The growing melancholy of Ruth attracted the sympathy of her friend cousin Sophy, who with William now resided across the river. The former attributed it to love—and hoped to see her brother soon made happy by a confession, which she, whom Ruth had for a time entirely loved and confided in, was a likelier party to elicit from so shy a girl, than the lover himself. But when she urged her to a disclosure of the cause of this change,—of her swimming eyes fixed on vacancy, her blushes kindling up without outward cause,—of her constrained manner to every one, including Marmaduke himself, Ruth grew as angry as if some crime had been imputed, utterly denied her being unhappy, and occasionally would laugh it off, giving some encouragement to the fond sister, to believe that her brother, who was really in love, had no cause to despond. Still she shunned the young man in all her haunts, anxiously kept herself at a distance from the blind man, whenever she could not help falling into company with the youth, so as never to be the object of his attentions in the father's presence.

At last Sophy entered in earnest on her

sisterly task of making an offer for the young man, whose very first steps towards it had been so often checked by the wayward girl, (though her deep blush, or sudden paleness, would have encouraged a bolder suitor,) that he entreated such singular aid, and thus courted by proxy.

"You know, Ruth," she remonstrated, "that your father himself would not object to William —he always has shown him kindness, and I'd lay my life upon't would be glad to see you his wife—"

"That's *false!* Nay, I'm only joking—but you'd *lose* your life then! Don't *I* know Marmaduke? *He* wish *me* William's wife or any body's wife? It's false! Who's to lead him about? *You,* perhaps?" Ruth astonished her friend by this new outbreak of a spirit irascible and rash, which none had ever believed to inhabit so gentle a bosom.

"And why do you call a father 'Marmaduke'? said her friend?"

Ever after the relation of Ruth's wild and dark dream, Marmaduke grew, daily, a more and more altered man. The languid pause of all passions, the equable course of a pastoral sort of existence, even the real happiness incident to a rural competence in his

little dairy farm, stilly conducted with very few helpers—all these were unable to avert that 'sickness of the heart' to which enthusiastic natures are liable, when wanting the rousing influence of adventure, hope, fear, vicissitude.

But what stung the devoted girl to the heart's quick, though she never told it, was a certain coldness in his manner, some changes in his modes of endearment, (but this seemed from the absent indifference of the mind much engrossed by some inward topic of thought,) and an alteration in his familiar terms of addressing her. Not that his vigilant watch over her welfare, or slightest sources of pleasure, was relaxed a moment. He grew, on the contrary, almost ludicrously anxious about the merest trifles regarding her amusements or taste, would send off man and horse to the town, if she but chanced to say, "How I wish I had such a fish," or "if I were at Conwy, I would buy one of those fine shells they sell there." The want of a many-coloured future, —the having nothing to hope—might account for the father's deep despondent gloom that seemed settling over all his mind, like a night-fall ominous of thunder. But what explained *her* despondence? Love—even love-melancholy has ever its little, secret, sacred fire of

hope within its deepest gloom, and its undefinable delight even in the fiercest agony. What could be the feeling, that in one so young, so remote from the worldly causes that blast the very bud of hope, could shed over *her* whole deportment, something so like "comfortless despair?" "And so I must never, never *see* my dear daughter, now Providence *has* blessed me with one!" Marmaduke said to himself, ripening, one day. "Could I but once—for one hour *see* that forehead that's so smooth, see the arm that comes round my neck, when I'm not well or low-spirited; if I could but for once see this gentle and fair being that is become so necessary to my being, I think I could shut my eyes, after, for ever, and be content. Yet I *should* see her *for ever* after! Never again could those features be out of my eyes, day or night—once seen, always seen!—I should never more be blind—What did I rave of—'night?' Nay, Heaven's providence would spare me their dazzle and their glory o' nights, for indeed I can fancy nothing less than a glory to shine round a face, having such power even unseen as her's has, to make a new world round me, one of joy or miserable gloom, just as her pretty-sounding step *comes* growing on my

ear like some fine music, or dies away as it *goes,* like some passing bell! What would her going *for ever* be like? Like a death-bell that told me every human heart but my own stood still! Yet she *must* go! Yes—she must marry; but that 's a distant thing."

In this soliloquy Ruth happened to approach, and he pursued aloud his reflections:—"And they will have it you are much like *me,* Ruth —yet *you're* fair they say, but dark-eyed—and *I* am *all* dark. Do you think you're like me, child?"

Ruth was dumb—confused—statue-like a moment—then sprung away from sitting by him—"*That* can never be!—oh, no! Wel-a-day, how should that be? But our old folk talk silly about those things."

Marmaduke was so engrossed in thought that he heard her imperfectly, and soliloquised aloud and unconsciously on a fresh topic.—"I wish we were again at the Orme's Head now! I was happier in the eternal melancholy music of that sea, the whistling of that gorse on the bleak sea-side down, when Ruth and I first walked together, than I have been here, in the midst of sweet meadows and singing birds, and Conwy plashing peacefully against its sod banks."

"And so do I!" Ruth exclaimed eagerly, catching at his soliloquising words, "Let us go back there! let us make a change! I do so love the wildness of every thing there—the fierce screaming sea-birds, the hollow bellowing of our mountain, the storms and the waves!"

"Ha! I was'nt speaking to *you*—oh no! *that's* a fit place for *me;* this fitter for you, poor girl! Oh, it's wrong, very wrong, that I let you waste your life thus, here, following a blind man that's a stranger to you, that never had you on his knee, a baby—has no recollection of your voice—your person—but as a ravishing music! but as beautiful! beautiful! D'ye think there's no beauty in my mind's eye, because my bodily eye's well nigh shut against you, girl? Aye, in my very eye of soul!—Yes, my dear, dear daughter! I shall not be so selfish to deprive some good man of the blessing of such a wife! But now, let's leave all that to the future, and enjoy this sweet air of a fine evening, and the coolness that this tumbling water from the great waterfall in the wood overhead throws round us, as it scatters a little shower (I can feel its sprinkle here) over these harebells, and the honeysuckles that I smell from somewhere, so strong and so delicious! Yet I'd rather Llanduddno rocks after all, that's

true! Didst ever have a sweetheart, my wench? Come tell me, my Ruth!"

Taken by surprise, she at first laughed, but being prest further, after hesitating confusion, avowed in the innocent frankness of her nature, the secret of her early childish attachment and later intimacy with William. She hardly knew, as has been stated, why she kept it one; yet such had been her anxiety to make it a profound one, that she even imposed secresy on the youth's sister, as a condition of her even *speaking* to him. Nothing had been so irksome to her as the idea of divulging to her father (as we shall continue to call him) the fact that even an overture of love had been made to her; but that of leaving him to believe that she had been favourable to it was intolerable. Yet she knew not why she felt so; and now that this so hated disclosure had been drawn from her, she felt as if she stood before him an offender—ready to be discarded for ever. Yet she knew that hitherto he had been so partial to his nephew, that she, notwithstanding, expected nothing but approval from his lips. It was a desolate feeling, and self-reproachful one within, which alone made her stand thus culprit-like.

Marmaduke leaped to his feet, like one wounded in the dark, or stung mortally while

sleeping in deep and flowery grass, and a mortal melancholy was painted on his speaking countenance, with the suddenness of the shadow of a solitary sweeping thunder-cloud, come all at once over an autumn landscape. His words were wild—"And you never told *me! me,* your only companion—only friend—protector—father! Is *this* to be a father? *My* nephew! *your* own uncle's own son! fye, fye! I care not about tables of kindred, I swear it's fulsome to think of such a nearness in blood between *lovers!* *You* to be a lover too—a baby? '*Played together when children?*'. Besides, he's of a bad family."

"*Your's* a bad family! *you* bad? Dear fath—"

"Dear me no dears! Aye, fool! *I am* of a bad family! How do *you* know how bad *I* myself am? how bad, and worse, and worst of men I may yet be? Am I dead yet? Is my account closed with my God and the judgment yet? How do *you* pretend to know me for a good man, much more my family, till you see me coffined—know all I've done—may yet do —all *they* have ever done? Yes! his father—my brother Hugh—once was with smugglers, and run more than one cargo under the Orme's Head!"

"Dear, dear father!" Ruth was beginning to say passionately, her eyes lighted up with joy of this unlooked-for disapproval, and seized his hand. He, mistaking the action for one of urgent entreaty for his favour towards a lover, threw hers from him with a mad ferocity, the action, and the flash, and the working of his fiery yet gloomy eyes, alike new and terrible to her.

"Entreat me no more, I say! Take your own wanton way and will! marry who you will, when you will—I'm but a blind fool, that here disclaim all right in your hand—this! where, where is it? this beautiful blessing, that I as clearly *see*, spite of my curse of blindness, white as milk, as I do surely feel it soft as the down of the swan's breast—I disclaim all right to the disposal of it, all hope of its being to me what it *has* been! There are hands enough in the world to lead *me*, groping, to some black haunt of hideous unspeakable sin, or throw me, dead, into a grave of the crossway! Go, go, go—why d'ye hang upon me? why fear a wretch so helpless as me? You may court and coo within a yard of me, and I be all ignorance of your doings, God help me, and take me!"

The astonished foster-daughter was so overpowered by this outbreak of passion, which

seemed to her a paroxysm of madness, that she fainted away. Marmaduke shrieked his terror when he felt her weight on his arm, met no answer to his wild question, "Was she ill?" cursed himself, laid her down to bring water from the cataract side: yet when her eyes reopened, their first expression was—pleasure!

From that hour, the former delightful intercourse between the blind and his constant guide, was turned to one of strange bitterness; the affection the same, the mutual dependence the same, yet the whole sweetness and comfort it diffused over either spirit utterly gone.

The impatience of Ruth under the secret she so longed to break, and thus undeceive Marmaduke, grew daily greater,—her feeling of something like guilt, in thus counterfeiting the part of a daughter, daily more painful. One part of her trials in this imposed innocent imposture she was now however spared, from the altered habits of her companion; for, with an evident almost agonising effort, he forbore all those endearments, so frequent once, so natural toward an innocent and childlike daughter. But if her delicacy, increasing with her confirmed womanhood, escaped that species of pain, the receiving paternal embraces from a man nowise related to her—the feminine *lov-*

ingness of her nature sustained a shock, a cold and mortifying pang, more keen than such wounded delicacy could have inflicted, from this inexplicable self-restraint, this mask of dislike and indifference in a friend so newly found, so rapturously received by her young heart, in the moment of its utmost want of such friendship,—that of her being left lonely, a helpless child in an unknown world.

CHAPTER V.

"To lose this treasure, which of old
Was all my glory, all my pride!
May not these arms that form enfold?
Is all affection asks denied?" CRABBE.

RUTH had been too terrified by the paroxysm of some fierce feeling she could not understand, to venture a renewal of it, by even mentioning to Marmaduke the name of her cousin. But it was not long ere Paull himself, as if struck with a sense of his own injustice, sent for the young man, in a friendly manner. He sate on a mossy shelf of the natural stone of the soil, which extended across the cottage front, and afforded the convenience of either a bench to sit on, or a shelf on which the utensils of the dairy might be placed to dry, after their being washed in the rude sort of cistern, also formed, with little effort of art, out of the slabs of mountain-stone, into a receptacle for the ceaseless overflow of the lofty-issuing, narrow waterfall, that came down from the romantic

heights, babbling and flashing silvery through the oaks, ashes, and other trees, growing, horizontally almost, out of the clefts and ledges of that cool, grand, and shady height. Under this the pretty little farm-house lurked, in its old greenish grey of walls rough-stoned. Though the huge stones forming the wall were of irregular shape, the effect of art in adapting their uncouth outlines, is so visible as to impart a sort of rude grace to the antique Welsh farmhouses, in picturesque contrast to the formality of brick and mortar conjunctions in prouder English ones. The green stains of moisture which had run down the house front, from the thatch and its vegetation deep and flowering, were not ugly to the eye of homely taste. The large stack of peat adjoining the house, the curling of the blue smoke from the straw-wisped chimney, the precipitous barrier of the mighty bank, towering like a verdant wall directly behind, conspicuous in its illuminated darkness of forest shade (now richly gilded by gleams of a setting sun, that shot up the vale of Conwy, and glistened between the tree heads and the rocks they grew from, bringing out to the eye all the trunks of pine and beech)—all these combined to throw a charm of homely quiet and even beauty round the

lonely nook of the residence of this sea-wanderer, thus domiciled in his native valley.

A small mountain pool (Llyn Eigian) supplies a stream that, after forming a cataract high up, called Rhaiader Mawr (or great cataract) passes under a romantic bridge Pont Porthlwyd—to lose itself in the main river and charm of the vale—the Conwy. The variously disposed fronts of the wild shelves of rock that formed the channel of this cataract, threw the broken body of waters it conveyed into a multitude of forms, scattering foam or flashing prismatic with every fresh direction thus given, while the circumfluous eddying of the torrent round every single mass, covered with shrubs and wild blooms, converted the single fall into numbers, those again uniting in fury of dash and recoil, and deepened noise of fall. Various lodgments for fern, golden and purple flowers, and dwarf trees, in the very face of precipices, catching the sun's long flash, stood out glistening from the midst of leafy darkness, taking a splendour not their own from the contrasted glooms around, as well as the dark hue of the slaty crags that tower and topple there, or conceal the depth of the fall, by terrible chasms and clefts of untraceable extent.

But close to the house, at the base of this

grotesque landscape hanging on the mountain side,—all was homely, all was still. A few grass fields yellowing in the last beams, enjoyed a deeper verdure from their proximity to the well-watered vale, and contact with their own humbler valley (or mountain chasm rather), down which this stream came, almost washing the house threshold. The cuckoo's voice was not overpowered by the lowered sounds of the many little streams, all murmuring round, but found in the single solemn melody of their united falls a sort of gentle symphony sweetly in unison with itself, lulling and full of philosophic melancholy.

The life of the dairy farmer, distinguished from that of the agricultural farmer, presents few features of disgusting nature. Butter, wool, and lambs are the staple resources for the few expenses of this mode of life, such as rent, purchase of cattle, &c. Sheep-shearing, churning, the task of tending sheep to the most verdant patches among the rocks, milking ewes and goats (at least formerly) and cows, and the spinning-wheel, form the chief of both male and female occupations. Hence the quietude of such a life as that led by Marmaduke found no great disturbance from the doings of less helpless inmates of his house;

hence the melancholy addition to the homely scene, of a blind and useless man seated on the craggy shelf outside, whose fine manly figure, and power of personal activity, made his inactive state more striking, was yet in unison with that scene,—a solitude and a wild cataract-chasm, woods tinged as if by autumn, by the last of a golden day, and the sun going down.

The figure of a neat rustic female, with basket on her arm, which came slowly gliding between the long leafy roof of a wild avenue of trees overhead, and the gilded green sward beneath, as the little path wound there towards the house, gave the charm of more active moving life to that placid picture.

Who, merely looking on, could have conectured the inward storm of passions which was brewing in that general peace of earth and sky,—in that commonplace, however pleasing prospect of rustic people and their haunts?—yet in that quiet sightless man, and in that lowly country maiden, were the elements of passion thus stirring, and perhaps preparing tragedies of actual life.

It was with a heart as heavy as her step that Ruth, coming from the market, loitered under those trees, checked by espying the young

man, William, in earnest talk with Marmaduke, whose extraordinary gestures rivetted her to the spot, so violent were they, as well as his rapid changes of countenance. Standing behind a tree, further curtained by dwarf oak and hazel bushes, she watched both in their imperfectly heard dialogue.

The weight on her heart had been but of a few hours' continuance. Sophy, on their way to the town, had told her, in confidence, that her father had not only resolved to marry, but that his future wife was to be no other than a woman of doubtful character, whom he had been attached to in his younger time, and about whom he had been (unknown to Ruth) making anxious inquiries in the neighbourhood where she formerly lived.

For since the day of that terrible emotion he betrayed, on Ruth's mention of her cousin's love, his restlessness had been great, and he made several journeys she knew not whither, under the paid guidance of strangers. Ruth had learned, by hints, the fact that there did exist somewhere an object of his former affection, but little thought of that person ever becoming his wife after so long an interval; yet he had not wholly hidden from her his half-formed design. But when his resolve was

thus communicated to her, it seemed that she had never heard of such design before (indeed it had never been believed), and her secret pain was extreme. And now she stood, pallid and weary, expecting some further trouble from this interview between the uncle and the nephew.

She saw a pale of unusual lividness steal over the features of the former, even to the lips that quivered, and the lofty forehead, while his hand was clenched, and a degree of trembling, visible even where she lurked, shook his frame till his knees almost struck each other. She remarked that while he extended his hand to the youth, his face was almost averted, and that when the latter seated himself by his side, Marmaduke shifted his seat further from him; then there was strange writhing of the features, as if of one under agony, and grim laughing, that even her simple ignorance could not hear without bursting into tears, so evident, conjoined with his aspect altogether, was the hollowness, the bitterness, the anguish of that laughter.

More than once he started up, and paced the turf with rapid and fearless step, notwithstanding the ruggedness of the denuded rock endangering his reckless tread. On one of these

occasions William, whose face was beaming all joy and surprise, in contrast to the turbulent dejected despair of the other, ran after him, and caught his hand in precaution, but the blind man, though in evident friendship with him, snatched it away as from the fang of some loathed animal, and turned on him a countenance stern almost to fury for that kind offer, as if that help, or that hand, was more unwelcome than the worst fall he might suffer from the want of it. At last William took leave with a face all thankful and lighted up, and Marmaduke remained sitting alone; his two hands were clenched, his look more composed, but a blacker melancholy sate on its ghastly fixedness of muscles, nothing stirring but his under-lip, that slightly quivered, and his eyelids, that winked more rapidly, while the sightless, though still clear, orbs were for a long space upturned to heaven, shewing the whites extensively.

Ruth learned too soon the nature of that conference. Marmaduke, secreting his own view to marriage, urged the suit of his nephew with a zeal she was long unable to believe sincere or designed, but as a trial of her real inclination. He had formally promised to the lover, at that interview, all his influence as a

father over Ruth, and kept his promise. He himself, meanwhile, prepared to remove back to the wilder home of the promontory, leaving Sophy and Ruth in his pleasanter farm of the valley. Ruth, however thunderstricken by this change, resigned herself to this new will of Marmaduke with an alacrity that might have seemed astonishing, had not his belief been that her previous reiterated avowal of dislike to the youth, was untrue, or merely a tender reluctance to quit him, and yield her office of leading him to another.

Thus, in a short time, was to be seen the father led by no one, not even a dog, trusting to a stick alone, wandering the wild and lonely sea-side down between the two Orme's Heads, or sitting melancholy in the sun at the door of the cottage where Alice Woolstoncraft* had languished out her life for him, and Ruth, not less plunged in a profound melancholy, though receiving the honest and warm addresses of her rustic lover, haunting the spots where ever she had led her blind companion, with a fondness of recollection such as no lover could have felt more constantly, more torturingly.

* It was the custom in Wales, down to within a century even, for the wife to retain her maiden name after marriage.

Sophy, the attached sister of a brother but recently restored from a long absence at sea, watched the actions of her future sister-in-law with perplexed wonder. To her watch the drooping girl betrayed all the symptoms of a violent first love :—her consent to an early marriage was not only full, but now was followed by some degree of eagerness for its solemnization,—yet was it evident to all but the hope-flattered lover, that *he* was not the object of that love, though that of her consent.

"Ruth! Ruth!" said the impatient sister one day, "you that used to tell me all your little secrets tell me none, and are keeping some great one from me—and from poor William, I 'm afraid you 're *in love!*"

"And, pray, would you have me *not* in love," she answered, laughing, "if you wish me to be your brother's ———"

"Wife, you would say? Yes,—with *him;*—but I 've watched your ways with him, and it's *not* William you like, I'm certain it's not! *Now*, you laugh, yet you 're as white as that rock, and just now you was red as those mountain-ash berries waving over it, and you look so *conscious* always, and many a time I 've caught you sobbing by yourself, ready to break your heart; yet thinking I had n't heard, you 've come *laughing*

to me;—your eyes always shrink down as if you was ashamed when I talk of love; yet when you meet William, instead of all these looks and ways being most *then*, there's no such thing!—and you make up your face, and if you smile at him, Lord! how ugly your smile is, because it's so sly and so forced! I can spy a sad frown within your eyes when you try to look soft at his! I do wonder the poor fellow does not see it too. How different you used to look, when you had been away but an hour, in your father's face when he wanted your hand, and his very eyes laughed, blind as he was, as they rolled to where he heard your steps, and said,—'*Here* she comes!' And what sets you crying now?"

Ruth grew daily more irascible. Her constrained gaiety now again changed to anger;—she "would *not* be catechised,—she had *no* secret; even if she were already her sister-in-law she would not put up with her charging naughty secrets upon her,"—with much more.

She "would *charge* Sophy, in her turn, with keeping a *cruel* secret,—the secret of her father's meaning to marry;—he never would have thought on't but for them two (her and William), far less insisted, as he did, on her (Ruth's) marrying. However, far as she'd

gone, she would never go to church till her father had been, and *then* she didn't care how soon —*nor with whom*, hardly," she added faintly, overheard by Sophy, who threatened to tell her brother, and the quarrel ran high. Ruth, however, lost her spirit totally with that single burst, and fell to crying humbly and bitterly, and very meekly entreated the girl not to tell him; "for that," said she, "will anger my father, and make him hate me worse than ever."

"Why do you think he hates you?"

"*Why?*" she retorted,—"why am I living *here?* Why is somebody else leading him now? Why am I left alone here?"

"And so you are all *alone*, with William living so near, and me along with you?"

"Oh, yes, yes!—alone! alone! alone!" the unguarded impassioned girl broke forth, clasping her two hands together, and raising them as to attest Heaven to her lonely brokenheartedness; then dropping both arms by her side, and bowing her head, stood drooping, fixing her eyes on the ground she trod on,—as if nothing remained to her, young as she was, of some blighted hope, or powerful desire, but those sad and solemn ones, of man in his utmost decay—the hope of mercy above—the desire of a grave below.

CHAPTER VI.

Cold nervous tremblings shook his sturdy frame,
And strange disease—he could not say the name;
Wild were his dreams—— CRABBE.

MEANWHILE nothing could be more dismal than the life led by Marmaduke Paull. He spent most of his time in a sort of cave hollowed out in the base of the Llanduddno rock, by the waves, not without danger of his being surprised by the returning tide: and he would climb the Orme's Head, and be seen conspicuous at a height where few would have believed it possible for a blind man to clamber alone. His native strong sense, and intuitive knowledge of human nature, told him how short-lived must be *his* hold on the heart of that young woman; how slight the claim to tenderness of a sightless declining father, when opposed to that (which must soon arise to defeat it) of a pretty tottering first-born, to be taught its first steps — the daughter's duty against the *mother's* doating! "Yet," said he

to himself, "God help me! what is a being like me, whose steps must be led for ever, while the child's are upheld but for a little while, what am I, who have been led by her, but a child in some sort, dependent as a child—parent and child in one, almost! But if I *do* want her as an infant might, would I even wish to deprive her of that sweeter joy, and all those domestic joys that belong to the mother's and wife's state?"

Thus brooded Paull, and tried to reconcile himself to his prospective state of desertion, and when he was next in Ruth's society (who frequently still came for a day or two to her old domicile, where the same aged domestic looked after the very small farm,) after one of these reveries, his talk was all of her union with William. Yet, in spite of his fully designing to sanction it, the very idea of her being on terms only of any thing like courtship with any one, *would* be eternally rushing back, like a perfect surprise on this deeply solitary, though highly social man's mind. His mind *could'nt* make acquaintance with that idea! It was strange, it seemed like a madness to himself, yet so it was. After weeks, months of what he thought a settling of the question in his own breast, the fatal "they," the startling plural of "Wil-

liam and Ruth"—*Ruth* the new-found, his *own* dear guide)—"Ruth and William" that new conjunction, for ever on his muttering tongue, was unbearable! It was irreconcileable to his soul, not to his *sensual* nature, he confessed not one pang of *that* species of jealousy to himself in his sternest self-scrutiny; no, it was such a jealousy as a child can feel towards a more beloved child, a sister toward a more favoured sister, where the prize is no less innocent a one than maternal love! Helpless as he was, it was indeed a trial, to consign to another, and for ever, *his own* helpmate, and so sweet an one! What wonder that when over night he had forced on his mind a sort of familiarity with, and endurance of this self-violence, before he had slept an hour, it came back, waking him in dead of night,—that hateful horror "William and Ruth:" "Ruth and her *husband!*" came back, as new as if a Doomsday were announced, and all graves burst open with their secrets; that it thundered to his thought after that brief sleep's respite, like the very trump of doom;—that his heart was set palpitating fearfully, that cold drops stood on his brow, that he sprung upright, almost as might one of those dead that died in some hideous sin, against God or Nature, start upright in

one of those yawning graves, chattering skull-teeth, and scowling madness in all their festering mortal ruin, with the ruins of their grave around? that *he* sate there shaking, while his flesh seemed to crawl, and the dark of night's dead, that was round him, which *he* could not break like another man, seemed to have fallen eternally on the whole world, where, he alone, was left to gnash his teeth, and die—die *alone, alone?* for nothing less than such obliteration of life, such a true world-at-an-end feeling as that, did at such times come crushing the soul of that sightless man, with the recurring thunder-peal of thought—"Ruth and William!"—"*They!*"

Why do we, mankind, talk of each other as creatures of one mould, one nature?—The hyena knows less of the inner nature of the most sweet of feminine bosoms—that sweet woman-bosom knows less of the awful divine pity in the heart of the Lamb of God when come in the flesh to "take away the sins of the world" (if it be lawful to so speak reverently)—than knows this *man*, of *man;* than understands human mind of human mind; and as little as feels that bloody hyena's heart for that heart of our incarnate (however frail, alas!) angel of the world—as little, less if possible, feels the ge-

neral Heart of a proud pretending high-civilized Community for any particular heart that ever bled or broke, is bleeding or is breaking!

"A good-for-nothing old fellow that must be, to be so shilly-shally about the young couple's coming together!" said many a harmless gossip, knitting on a green bank or earthy threshold, in the pleasant valley. Could she or such have entered that blind hermit man's bosom, and caught but a faint conception of its pains, of that *desolateness*, which would have owned as a sort of remedy *any* other pain even to rousing agony—any but *this*, which itself was instrumental to that desolation; — could she have conceived what it is to *feel* with the enthusiasm of some higher nature, and to want the poorest object on which to vent that feeling of more than man, to keep it all for that noisome hole, a grave—to *die* the death of the self-bloated toad or poisoned reptile, that crawls out of man's sight to die—the death of any thing less even than man—could this cool reviler, I say, have *understood* the being she reviled, would she not have pitied, and for shame, if not for pity, have exclaimed, "God help him!"?

At least, let us not rashly assign to evil passions the fact that after such dead-night paroxysms as these, Paull wavered in his resolve—

bade Ruth *defer,* at least, her talked of nuptials; neither to her, innocent as she was, attach blame that such delay came almost to her *filial* heart with all the becalming luxury of a respite to the death-doomed.

After a time, Ruth resolved to divulge to him her knowledge of his contemplated marriage. Whatever was his prompting motive to this seemingly inconsistent design, it was *not* passion. It appeared that he had not been successful in finding out this object of some long-past attachment. Perhaps it was compunction—a sense of duty in fulfilling some old conjugal promise. Or it might be a self-violence, by which he sought to resist some inward passion that he rather dreaded *might* grow out of one so unbounded as what he now felt for this all-engrossing new companion, (companion no more, alas!) than deemed dreadful *now.*

So inconsistent is the mind with itself, that he could not repress a strange touch of resentment against the poor girl, for that very devotion in prospect, of her help and hand and heart to another, which would be the result of his own act. Thus, though become, by the loss of them, more peculiarly than ever a thing of scorn and uselessness among men (the sad fate

of blindness) it was hardly to her, as that renounced helpmate, that he could turn for comfort, even in thought, under that mortifying sense of subjection to all and beneath all men.

The poor separated girl, however, had no such tremendous paroxysms of anomalous passion as thus shook the soul of Paull, to break the monotony of her grief. Well and truly wrote the unhappy Cavalier that his "mind was a kingdom" to him: so is the heart to the feeling young a world. As his firm and fruitful mind made of his prison-cell a realm, so did the heart, shut from its sweet resource of indulged filial fondness, to her make of the world a prison. For now, surrounded with all that beautiful pastoral scenery could spread before every sense, she was in the midst of desolation. And what her escape or respite thence? The few long-divided days she spent with him in the midst of what in comparison was real desolation—surrounded by all that sea, breakers, barrenness, and caverned coasts can spread, to awe the senses and sadden the mind. Yet, even there, her mysterious friend's silence on so momentous a measure as his second marriage, kept a restless pain, and sort of petty anger without malice, at her heart. Probably Paull had some objection, founded on the deli-

cate, perhaps culpable, nature of his old attachment (which he dreamed of now renewing) that prevented his disclosing it to her.

However this might be, Ruth resolved to probe this secret of his bosom, and one day began, the moment she saw him, after some days' separation, to rally him on the matter. It is observable that the habits of a young female, in the affair of love, and its various states, exhibit some odd paradoxes. She never speaks with so much drolling vivacity, or trifles so sillily, as when touching on a subject most deeply agitating to her secret heart. Again, when happy in her hopes, when her love is returned, or she believes so, when love's delicious new-found fountain in her heart's former desert void, is replenished by a thousand little minute blisses of fancy, like a stream by the prismatic raindrops of a sunny shower—*then* how silent, how taciturn, how full of seeming melancholy she is! Yet her pensiveness may be detected as deep joy and a heart-full brimming luxury of tenderness—rich as a river rolling through a very sea of verdure, and snowy flocks, and all rural wealth—and as silent.

On the other hand, when the fount is ebbing, when her "true love" does no more "run smooth," when her poor heart begins to fail

her, and the melting moments are few or over, and deep doubts and pains, never dreamed of before, begin to chafe her gentle mind, that was lulled in so sweet a rest—*then* she grows vivacious! then that melancholy—that fine melancholy!—disappears. It is gone from her soft pensive face, but gone, under a dismal transfiguration, to hollow out her heart for a ruin in which it may hide and gnaw; her change thus resembling (if broken metaphor may pass) that river still, when shrunk for want of refreshing dews and showers, it sinks so low as to brawl with all the rocks and worn gullies which its rich brimming condition completely hid, and went grandly sweeping over, reflecting bluest heaven, and feeding the fat meads and all their flowers—without a sound, save the softest, that of its solemn flow. *Now* all is sound and white foam, and leaping of little cataracts, through the whole of its almost empty bed. Yet a black and solemn pool, graver than ever, is to be espied, *now* under oak root, or hollow cavernous rock.

"I come to give you joy, sir!" said Ruth, dropping a playful courtesy.

"*Joy?* joy of what, child?" he said, rather sternly.

"Of your marriage, that *is to be.*"

"Who said it *is* to be? And if so, how do you know it 's a matter to be merry about? *You* give me joy of my going to be married? You offend me!—But you only joke."

"Pardon me," said she, suddenly crying secretly; "though you never told *me*—" As he took her two hands in his, a hot tear fell on his hand, and betrayed her weeping. "Yes—though it may seem wishing you joy in an odd fashion to thus come with tears and sobs, I *do*, and I *am* glad, because now I shall know that *you* at least will not want a companion, when —when—"

"My love, how you tremble! sit, sit down! When you 're a wife, you would say?"

Ruth was long struggling with an hysteric choaking. At last, she said, "I can't help being queer when we first come together, hand in hand, again. I don't complain—I can but obey you, in giving this hand away, since you want it no longer," and she cried more bitterly. "If death will take it away from William again, or not let me even give it, it's not my fault. Grief *does* kill, they say—and when I think how proud, how cold, how cruel, how careless, this whole world of strangers round you and me, is—oh, when I then think of us two parting our lives—of throwing ourselves

asunder on that world — oh! is'nt it as if two poor wrecked men on one raft, would split that little saving raft into two, on *purpose*— on *purpose* to be each alone—alone in the great horrid sea?"

"We never, *never* will! Kiss your father, my sweet innocent! nay, do! *Part?* Have I been mad? My own dear child, dry your eyes —nay, let me kiss 'em dry. Stop *here* this week—stop a month. Nay, but I'll come back to the other farm. William must give you up. At least, *defer* it, my dear: *defer* the matter."

"*Defer?*" she said, sobbing.

Repeated retractations of Ruth's promise to her lover, now drove him to a luckless resolution, in his thoroughly aroused resentment. By both him and his sister it was imputed to the arbitrary caprice of the father; nothing was talked of in the little round of the hamlet, and cots up the vale of Conwy, but the mysterious conduct of father and daughter. Great pity was expressed for the youth whose feelings were thus trifled with, and at last he was induced to consent to a plan, little consonant to his former feelings, by which to do himsel justice.

There was among the persons that a sea-life had made his acquaintances, a dissolute fellow-

townsman, a smuggler now—once away in a piratical vessel it was rumoured—at least, his own hints, dropt when he had been testing the strength of his own spirit cargo, of desperate doings which he could no otherwise have witnessed, afforded the fair inference. He was the leader of all loose and disorderly spirits in more than his native town (Conwy). Bangor and Beaumaris held many young men like himself, and a fight for a boat-load of spirits against revenue officers, was matter of ambitious glory and hope, rather than a thing to be feared or secreted, by Davy Shakerly, or "Davy the Pirate," as he was called, for the Welsh common people never scruple to nickname one of their class, with whatever epithet some point in their character, true or imputed, seems to warrant. Nor does the party fail to acquiesce in this new baptism, perhaps finding it the easiest mode of dealing with the affront, which at last comes to be considered as none, any more than an Englishman's surname of "Savage," or any similar.

To this man William had disburthened his bosom and his heartburnings under the slights put on him, and it was agreed that on the very day which Ruth had fixed, should she be waylaid, hurried off by a party of those youths, and

conveyed to a parish church in a lonely situation on the coast, there to fulfil her engagement. The minister of this church was one of that kind that formerly might be found disgracing their calling, habitually intoxicated, beggared by improvidence, and in all respects sunken to the level of the lowest of their parishioners, who, in this instance, comprising many smugglers and hardened characters inured to a roving life both on land and sea, formed a society more than commonly unfit for the enjoyment of a Christian pastor.

As the readiest approach to this place was by sea, but a few miles of which were to be crossed, it was agreed on, rather in reckless love of a daring frolic (if not with some further worse view of the chief actor) than any friendly sympathy with the jilted young man, as they called him—that a boat with six should be moored secretly in readiness, under Llanduddno's rocks, while the party would proceed up the lofty down above, and surprise the fair inconstant, either while leading her father, or in the solitary house, where were none likely to resist her abduction.

The passionate sister, estranged from Ruth through her love for her brother, was an accomplice in this wild plot, which was indeed

considered as rather against her father than her, and but a forcing her to her own wish; for Ruth had long so earnestly tried to remove Sophy's suspicions of her loving some other person, that she succeeded, and as the latter clearly detected the fact that she *did* love some one, she at last fully believed that Ruth's distress all arose from her father's unreasonable vacillations about her marriage.

"So now we 've settled all about this little job, have not we?" said David Shakerly to his companions, forming a group in moonlight, that stood on the strand in the shadow of one of the towers of Conwy Castle. "Ye 're to be all at word of command under me—is'nt that so, Billy Paull?" William assented—"And you've proof plenty of the poor girl's consent, and her fixing the day, and *I've* seen the parson—a precious wet soul! and loves fun as well as he did his tithe, till it was *quested*—what d'ye call it?—for his creditors. A precious jollification we 'll have on the wedding night, my lads, and you're all witness that Bill agrees to my smacking those pretty lips, that I shall stop pouting, as often as I please when they are spliced."

The sullen vindictiveness of William's mood, evinced in this to him unusual lawlessness of daring, ill brooked even such a joke. His

trouble internally betrayed itself, while he thought of his delicate cousin's even brief coercion by these wild spirits, in spite of his faint laugh and serious dissent from this pledge.

"Some of us must go along the steep down there, coming to Llanduddno, by the way of the old ruin of Dinas, and its caves, and the rest in the boat row along close in shore, and moor her under the cliff. *I'll* see there be plenty of cheer for body and spirit, beef and hung salmon, and beer, and brandy too stowed aboard, for the parson made me promise that; the devil a comfort is there in his wild wet parish along the coast, but fume of pitch paying the crazy fisher-boats, and of the dead fish, or a few broiling, though there 's hardly a hearth in it so good as our old dames make upon the beach here, to burn the sea-wrack for kelp, of the wet beach stones, nor a fire better than burns in that—"

"It 's a snug farm-house enough, I 'm sure," said William, "where we're going to stop the night, and the people friends to both her and me; but I 've sold some fat cattle on purpose to meet a little expense, and I 'll pay all damage of *your* enjoying yourselves with the old parson."

"What the d——l makes the old dad so loth to part with the wench?" one asked.

"Part with *her?* part with the *rhino* you mean," exclaimed Shakerly. "He likes to keep her, because of that little property that his dead wife, Alice, had in her own right, and she left to the girl, when he was believed dead and gone; and so long as she's dangling with him, he'll manage her money for her—you know that, don't you, Bill, my hearty?"

"I never said so," muttered William, "I may have my thoughts—but I don't care what's his reason for making a fool of me, whether his reason's gone from him, or what it is; but I know I'll not be baulked a third time. No! I don't say so—my uncle's not selfish—besides he's not poor. But I don't think she'll deceive me again—I don't think there will be occasion for this rough work—perhaps we'll have a happier sort of wedding, and keep it at home as we ought to do, if he has any conscience or feeling."

"Well, well, a week or two will prove," cried Shakerly. "Wednesday week, my hearties! out goes the coble, up with a sail, when we've catched the little wild dove; nothing like waves to dance upon at a wedding, oars and sail, and wind, and away! Here's the boy to stop her

cries and her heart's beating! You can see us from the church almost come all the way over."

"What! is'nt Bill Paull coming in the boat," asked one.

"No, you fool, to be sure not, he'll better make his peace with her before night, if he keeps out o' the mess of forcing her aboard, won't he, d'ye see?"

"I've not yet quite made up my mind," said William, doggedly, "about that matter; but I've made up my mind that the marriage day she has baulked me of, more than once, *shall* come now, come what will, the devil, or law, or what not—but there'll be no need, this time, I hope."

Thus did disappointed passion pervert the nature of this young man, which was rather tender, and impel him headlong into a rash enterprize, in which he was himself almost as likely to become the outraged party, as the poor girl he would thus entrust to that reckless little band of half nautical, half rustic, plotters against her free agency, if not her virtue.

Great indeed is the contrast between the Welsh members of the Established Church, even up to this day. A mean and depraved man, even illiterate and a drunkard (hard terms, doubtless, to apply to any one of such sacred calling,) is perhaps found next (parish) neigh-

bour to a worthy and upright pastor, a person of refined *habits* if not manners, a recluse, and a profound Celtic antiquary.

Such a contrast to the degraded character alluded to by the party just retired, was presented in an elderly clergyman whose lonely church was situated on the promontory of the Creiddyn, that commot or hundred of Carnarvonshire, which, consisting of successive swells and hollows of russet greensward, thinly stocked with flocks, but diversified in part by woods and ancestral mansions of fine antiquity and solemn peacefulness, terminates by those two majestic headlands, "the two Orme's Heads," in the sea. This good man, living in the humblest style, with a large family, all forced to aid by industry his scanty resources, and busying himself like a peasant with rural affairs, did, merely by force of his known innocence of life, and sense-corrected zeal in religion, perhaps even by his rustic and unclerical exterior, command the sincere reverence of all. No father-confessor, in other days, of one of those monastic homes for broken spirits or hearts, of which the grassgrown relics lurk in the fine glooms of those antique woods in more than one deep deserted dingle, ever enjoyed so full a confidence, or opened hearts so easily to

pour their troubles into heart rather than ear, as did the primitive vicar of ———. He had long noticed the deep melancholy of Marmaduke's countenance, since his return to the Creiddyn, a contrast to its pleased placidity when he first came thither, and was led by his new-found daughter. He remarked his sitting, hour after hour, among those hillocks that mark the *barrows* below, containing human ashes when opened, so numerous on many of the maritime mountain sides; and, though not his own parishioner, the good man equally felt concern and pity for him. But sympathy of man seemed rather painful than soothing, for the blind melancholic quickly shifted his place, on the pastor's sitting down by him, or leaning on the crook with which he followed his own sheep (a real shepherd) to talk with him in the still noon.

Now, however, Marmaduke, it appeared, resolved to avail himself of this gentle, pure, and holy bosom hitherto opened to him in vain.

He came by one fine twilight, with his stick alone to guide him, and his glimmer of remaining sight, to the priest's own house, a cottage, but a comfortable one. The owner sate at the foot of a sycamore, cutting prongs for hay-

forks, which he was manufacturing for his little hay harvest, provident for future wants. A daughter, of about Ruth's age, was milking a few ewes in a little penfold, formed under another tree, a hollow one, dead of age, while she smiled with turned head to talk with her father, and sometimes hummed a tune in unrestrained cheerful freedom of love-intercourse. One boy helped his father, an older son was just to be descried across the little breadth of green ground that sloped down to a sandy beach, hanging a net where the yellowness of that character of shore was heightened by the line of all the West, flushed with a rich orange glow, where the sun had lately gone down in serenest majesty, leaving a sea hushed, as if the element, inspired with awe, respected the monarch's rest within those glorious curtains, not yet quite faded from purple and flame-crimson, to that more pensive tint.

Terrific as is that grand coast of caverns, precipices, and promontories, when lashed by the mountainous waves, and shaking its heath and gorse clumps in the unbroken fury of the winds of the whole sea's waste, now it whispered only peace, even a holy peace, like some aisle solemnly softly lighted up by a sunshine, tempered

by the medium of its antique painted glass, into a softness like that of the moon.

Marmaduke, the moment he heard the girl's voice, was retiring, as wishing to talk apart with the father, and a tinge of red passed over his browned cheek, whatever was the inward cause, at hearing the endearing paternal voice of the good man to his child.

"My love, here 's our neighbour Marmaduke, he must come in to supper. Step in and set another bowl and spoon, the milk 's ready in the skillet, and warm, is not it? Take down one of the fine cakes from the *cratch;** run and take his hand, Kitty, quick, dear, quick! I marvel at your liking to venture alone so always, neighbour," he continued, turning to the visitor, and taking his daughter's office in rising to shake hands. Marmaduke sighed, faintly repeating the word, *like!* "You 're just in time for supper, and here comes our Hugh, he has been dragging the sea pools among the rocks, left by the tide, and it 's odds but he has a fish or some crabs. We won't keep you a minute after, only a prayer and away, and Kate will lead you."

* The lattice work shelf suspended from part of the ceiling, and parallel with it, still *correctly* called by the Welsh "cratch," the old word—whence improperly our "rack;" as in "rack and manger."

"No, thankye," he answered, "I'd rather not that,—and I'll sup another time—no need now —I've more need of the prayer, perhaps!" he concluded, unable to hide that which his bosom was bursting to disburthen into one so gentle and pious.

"My dear neighbour, your words and tone take off *my* need of food too, I think. You shock me—let us talk—but you look exhausted!

"Oh, father!" the girl called out, "I do think here's that nasty Parson Smash—'Swilly Smash' as they do call him, coming up the sands."

"Why don't ye call him by his proper name— Mr. Williams, child?" said the father. "At least his calling should protect him from affronts, though for the *man*—alas! Neighbour, we'll walk on the sands if he's coming hither—he *is* I see."

A robust old man in dark grey coat and stockings of chocolate brown, the colour of the dark sheep's wool, soon appeared. His remains of a fine, bold face, with its still frolicsome eye, pimpled, and of a purply dark species of ruddiness, bespoke a *mountain* constitution, but an abused one, for it was bloated, and the eye, clouded by constant semi-stupefaction, had a goggling look in spite of its native fire, that

hinted of idiotic threatenings or apoplectic. A striking contrast to the features of the Rev. Mr. Llewellyn, the streaked pink of whose cheeks, though fainter, and whose countenance, though exhibiting more years, yet with the clear, beautiful, benignant, blue eye of perfect intellect, beaming heartfelt kindness to whatever sentient thing it turned on, exhibited far less of visible old age.

His slighter frame, also, in its elastic step, and perfect ease of motion, was almost boyish compared with the other, though that was not infirm. Nor did the one in its unstudied quick walk, lose anything in dignity thereby, but formed on the whole a far more venerable object than the other, with its measured slower tread.

Before he reached them, Marmaduke inquired whence came his nickname. "*Smash*," answered Mr. L. "is applied, you know, to any one who has been in the habit of breaking, or having their goods *sold up*, as it 's called; and this unhappy brother of mine has been so often 'sold up' —his living is under sequestration now—that the thoughtless lads have so named him, and altered also his real name William or Willy into '*Swilley*,' as one always swilling. He was once an exciseman; but, hush!"

"Well, brother labourer in the vineyard! Peace be unto you! What the d——l be all these chips?—carpenter-work? Brother Chip, indeed! But God bless ye, let your dainty dear wench there, bring me one glass of the real stuff from o'er the way (Ireland) *sweet* whiskey! or else brandy, for the sea brine has fairly pickled my tongue till it's like a dried neat's one."

"I fear," said Mr. Llewellyn, "we used the last drop for those poor wrecked men, the other day, and I keep no spirits at all but as medicine, and mostly it goes for that sort of purpose on this melancholy coast. I never taste any. But Kitty! or Peggy! bring a jug of *cwrrw*,—or would ye prefer *diodgrafel*, Mr. Williams? The ash berries failed up the inner country last season, but I think my daughter has saved a few bottles."

Parson Williams made a face, as if crunching a crab or sloe, at mention of the last liquor.

"I surely know that voice," Marmaduke said; "is'nt that the Mr. Williams, Exciseman, I knew at Llandifrydog near Dulas Bay?"

"The very same, and you the boy or lad, Marmaduke, now no longer a lad, and I no longer a Custom House watch-dog, but som'ut better—the Reverend William Williams at your

service;—it suits my temper vastly better to watch a flock than a pack of smugglers. I was a bit fond of their stuff, so I grew to love *them*, too, and gave a hand to haul a few kegs up a cliff. Where was the harm? I 'll tell the truth, and shame the devil—Government turned me out, but the Church took me in—I was a stranger and she took me in; so here's a d—n for the Custom House, and the House of God for ever! and good health to ye both!" he concluded, his fat cheeks bulged by his laughing mouth's extension of cleft, always wide, while he raised to his thick lips the large brown jug the girl brought, dropping a courtesy as he took it (the invariable compliment on occasion of your taking anything presented from the hand of a rustic Welsh maiden).

Marmaduke begged to speak apart to the jolly priest.

"Did you know one Elizabeth Oliver, a very fair girl, long ago, in your old neighbourhood, who went to live at the town of Beaumaris, across yonder? I 've made many inquiries, but cannot learn anything of her—I know she was born where you was stopping one of your terms."

"Ha, ha, ha! looking after old sweethearts, eh? I warr'nt now, you mean 'Bessy Fair?'

'Bessy the beauty!' I never knew her surname in my life, but I think I see the white creature now—a dainty creature—none of you're 'mankind' women—but a *wicked* one though!—a melting creature she looked, ecod! I was young enow then to stare her into a smirk and a fine colour, 'Bessy the beauty!' God! she was one, too!"

"What's become of her, did ye know?"

"Ah! poor thing, I lived to see her live to be not worth looking at! hagged and thick complexioned, and so lifeless!"

"But is she dead?"

"Faith, I forget. Yes, I believe so, but after I met her once when she was in service at Beaumaris, walking in the wind on the sand hills, one dark evening, and saw what an altered poor devil it was, I never thought to ask anything about her any more, not I. I know she's dead, though, now I think of it; I had it from her mother, but I never asked how or where she died, not I. She was a poor morsel for the worms, for all her nice, tempting, white plumpness was gone, even when I saw her. I think she died single, though."

Marmaduke was silent and absorbed, while he continued,

"Yes—ecod! I never saw such a change!

If you remember her, you know her every bone was as smooth covered as that polished top of a rock yonder, that the sea has rounded beyond any chisel, and the white surf just lets one see the *cut* of, like, and no more,—and afterwards, my stars! her neck and collar bones and arm bones, were like that naked, dry, rough reef yonder. Now I can't bear angles and bones detected about a woman's body, can *you?* Flesh! soft flesh! 'Let the flesh hide thee!' as the play-book says, talking about marrowless bones—God help us, we're all but things of a day—'all flesh is grass!' Here's good health to ye both—and where will I find a supper and straw the night? It's over late for the fish boat I came in to stop for me, I'm too tired—I must rest—I must recruit."

Mr. Llewellyn, walking near, heard his words, and offered a bed.

"Oh, *my* bed's made o' summer nights wherever there's clean oat-straw, barley-straw, or fern, for that matter, and a dry beast-house. I prefer it—I often wake there, and know nothing how I came in, nor where I am, till the low grumble of the cows startles me! The manger, my brethren—the blessed manger! we know who it was lay there, and God

forbid vile man should think shame of snoring in the straw beneath it."

Mr. Williams's habits rendered his latter statements strictly correct, he being frequently deposited, at the family's retiring hour, in such dormitory, which is indeed (as has been said) no unusual night-lodging for the farm-servants, male and female, in dairy districts. A large space is devoted to housing the cattle, and one of the narrow divisions formed by strong old posts and rails, where the litter and hay is kept, forms the chamber for these bedfellows of the kine.

"The devil is, how to contrive for spirits! You have some good *cwrrw*, too, neighbour, I must make a shift."

"We'll be back soon; go in, and my daughters will take care of you." So saying, Mr. Llewellyn led Marmaduke to the sands, across a plot of russet ground, which though of marshy nature was now dry and of a pleasant green, with the singular species of the creeping dog-briars, (if I am not in error in so calling them, to represent their appearance,) whose miniature roses (*rosa spinosisima*), thus seen under foot, instead of flaunting overhead, form a novel beauty to a *Sais* (Saxon) visiting this secluded point.

"I'm always vexed," said the patient pastor, "when that poor man comes over the bay; but if one thwarted him, and shut our doors against him, who knows how much malice and uncharitableness we might be accessory to instilling into his heart and poor blind soul, so adding to his deformity in the sight of God? For a like reason, I never argue with him, for knowing it must be a chastening hand—pray God it be not too heavy for the old man to bear!—an Almighty chastening *hand*, not my feeble *voice*, that can alone reform him, what would my haranguing do, but add stubborness and ingratitude to his other faults?"

"You're in the right, sir!" Marmaduke suddenly broke forth, "the least said to an incorrigible or inevitable sinner, is the most mercy."

"And what would you with me, my friend and neighbour?" the other inquired as they reached the strand.

"In truth, I know not what!" said Marmaduke in a hurried manner— "advice; yet who can advise about such a point?—Mere sympathy, then,—pity—no—*abhorrence!* yet I wrong myself——some human heart besides my own to conceive what I feel,—but how *can* another feel it? *That's* the very point! I

pant after fellow-feeling in a pain, a hideous perplexity, the very essence of which is, that my fellow men never did, never can feel it! The worst, the foulest are as newborn babes and innocents in *that!* Let's go back! I may make you hate me, shudder at me, but never, never, make you a sharer, a comforter in my most strange trouble! One point that I thought to ask advice on, I have had settled even now, by talking with that man; the other is not one of human action—no matter of choice, nothing to reject or admit—but something I am already a committed wretch in having dared to divulge even thus far!"

"Sit on this ledge of rock, I entreat you," said the pastor, trembling with the suddenness of this seeming confession of some black sin, from one whose religious feelings he knew to be strong, and whose life, at least while on shore, simple and innocent.

"Nay," Marmaduke rejoined, with hollow voice of suppressed anguish, "lead me to that shadow. Is it the cliff, or is night thickening eastward, that I see?"

"No it's that horn of this cove which cuts off the west and its light from our eyes."—"No matter—lead me into some dark——Oh, father! let me so call you, for I know your

goodness, your loving-kindness to me and to all men, beyond any of these old holy men that people used to confess themselves to, and cry to 'Father, father! —oh, father! what shall I do?' As a mortal father, too, one blest in a sweet daughter, as I am cursed in one, I must ask you, what shall I do? what can I do? You cannot more doat on your sweet girls at home, than I do on mine— yet——"

"What! Ruth turned out so ill? Cursed in *her?* My heart bleeds for her, as much as for you. Oh! what has that once innocent creature done?"

"*Done?* Made mine a happy life were it ending now, by but the short time she was with me here, where she must not lead me longer! Oh never think it was she that I meant cursed me! She's innocence itself— *She* has done nothing."

"Be composed,—trust in God's promise to save the wicked man's soul alive, who turneth away from the wickedness he hath committed,— and so trusting, now trust *me* also with this hidden sin that is so heavy in your breast."

"I talk and but mislead you," answered Marmaduke. "I *have* no heavy sin here! I have committed none, or but what belongs to the common evil of our natures. It is my very

loathing of sinful thoughts, and promptings of the foul fiend, that drives me to you."

"You are in danger then of falling,—you cannot resist some fierce temptation, or fear you will fail in the conflict?"

"Oh no, no, by allseeing God, no! so far from that—"

"Nay, nay, brother, keep to yourself the nature of the temptation—I have no curiosity—I can equally pray for your deliverance, know it, or know not. It is before God not Man we are to prostrate ourselves, and be ashamed. Be not angry, however, if I say—be not *too* bold,—'Let him who standeth take heed lest he fall.'"

"Dear and good man—feel for me! I have nothing to confess! the ideas, the feelings that come between me and—and—that dear child of mine—are horrors, ugly horrors, not temptations. This perplexed talk—this delirium, as it must seem to you, is a faint picture—woe's me! *but* a shadow—of that confounding of finest and foulest feelings, delicious and pure thoughts, and loathsome ones, that are now for ever fighting *here*, and here!" and he struck his forehead and his breast.

"The only temptation I know, as such, is the all-pure joy that tender fathers feel in their

dear daughters! What you feel to yours—what you'll feel to-night when you kiss her and say 'good night, my love.' "*That's* what I alone want. Is that a crime? *That's* what I had for a while,—that is what I despair ever to have more! Is that a wish to be confessed? *Wish* beside, Heaven that hears me knows I have not — I would not live to have — I would execute on my most execrable self, justice, bloody justice, could it ever amount to that!"

"And what deprives you of a father's happiness? I can't yet understand."

"You well may not,—I cannot clothe the subject in its proper words, to startle a pure and innocent-*thoughted* father all at once. — Ah! Sir, *you* never dreamed of wishing that dear child of your bosom, to be *not* the child of your bosom; *you* are proud to feel her your own—you have her babyhood in your eye yet! *I* never knew I had that longing of my soul, foolish longing! granted, a baby girl, till in the full beauty—yes! my *soul* is not blind—the glorious beauty of womanhood it burst upon me, mixed with the blandishments of a sweet child, and a helpless one! If yet you are in the dark, I'll try to talk with something like

method, by the edge of the sea—but I detain you from home."

"Till midnight, and welcome, if I can but lighten your breast a grain of its load. The curate will not stir after his jug and pipe is given to him, and the night 's sweet and soft. Methinks I see a little, and I hope, that whereas I at first feared that sin and shame brought you to me, as a guilty man, the truth is, that a virtuous horror of even its image too close, and a delicate purity and over-dread of even an involuntary step out of Nature's (or our second nature's) strict path, brings you to me as your adviser, *not* confessor."

The conversation that followed was long and low, as they walked on the margin of the sea by starlight. The words of Marmaduke as they returned, and he paused near the house, were——"So by that time you will have weighed all I have said, and you will seal my doom? I expect your judgment as I might that of heaven made audible, and will no more think of disobedience to it, than to the voice of God, whose minister you are. Two fates depend on it. If my child must be a wife—if we must live apart— if she *ought* to become an *unwilling* wife, and keep her faith, if my

heart burst, I 'll not rebel against your verdict, it shall burst *alone !* "

As Marmaduke was proceeding homeward led by the daughter, they heard a calling voice behind, and Parson Williams caught him by the arm. He was intoxicated, but not without recollection of the business that brought him, which was to extort from Marmaduke a little money or promise of it, for some disclosure which he had to make *on that condition*, being indeed the secret of the abduction plot confided to him by the young men of Conwy. It was in vain however that he darkly hinted or broadly declared some danger impending towards him, which he for some silver would avert. His own stupid state and the abstracted thoughtfulness of the other, conspired to prevent his receiving any serious attention. Marmaduke, plunged into his new state of limited suspense on a vital question, would not even be persuaded to stop, and he retired muttering something of threatenings, which the girl laughed at, as deeming them his drunken attempt to alarm.

They met Ruth, in great alarm at the lateness of Marmaduke's return, hurrying along the path round a steep declivity. The clergyman's daughter spoke affectionately to her, the nar-

rowness of the foot track obliging both to pause as they met. Poor Ruth, struck at sight of her old office thus taken by another, could not speak a word for a short space, though she knew who was his guide. Perhaps it was a prophetic pang, as the idea of his marriage was thus forced on her, and that of his *future* guide; though this it seemed was become groundless. However she recovered speech at last, and wiping one tear from her eye secretly, bade her kindly good night, and for once more resumed her too dear office.

The deep stillness of the summer night, something of boldness which dark and a starry heaven's free vastness, and glooms of wood and mountain (for they had to pass along the skirt of an ancient wood inclosing a monastic ruin), never fail to inspire, and possibly the recent view of *another* leading him, these or other deeper springs of female resolve and strong emotion, possessed the forlorn girl or this solemn walk.

"Suppose it possible," she began to say, tremulously, but, as she proceeded, energetically, "that I should *not* be your daughter after all! no kin at all to you! no more nearness of blood than there is between two people that may marry; not so much of course as between

two cousins (and a burning blush suffused her whole face); just as if I had been only at nurse with Alice Woolstoncraft, or any poor soul you was married to and directly forced away from, as you was from her; *Alice* no mother of mine! only 'make believe' so, as children say; and *could* you love me afterwards, *at all?* When I should be *nothing* to you, not your Ruth, but somebody else's Ruth, you would never care for me more, *would* ye now?" she said, affecting playfulness, "*Dear* Marmaduke!—a funny way of calling my dad!—*make believe* now I 'm a poor strange girl on a sudden, *you* not my father, *she* not my mother—wouldn't that be being quite a stranger? And *now, do you love me?*"

This was a wild start of feeling, in that so softening hour, and that love-whispering scene among the fragrant lime trees, and low twitter of sleepy birds, which the next moment made the impassioned girl start at herself, and wish to God she could recall the words! They smote her like guilt, in spite of truth, that told her she but veiled the simple fact as a wild hypothesis; for Marmaduke had not even been *foster*-father to her, and his wife had not been mother, and he had never even witnessed or shared at all her part of foster-mother

which alone was hers. What was he then to her? Even the shadow of affinity existed not, and a brief period's mockery of a relationship alone stood between them as a barrier to mutual warmer passion. Ought it to divide them, so *needing* as well as loving each other? Might not such a singular advent of a tie render it only firmer, fonder, perhaps purer, for the short delusion?

All these questions flew over the mind of her companion as a crowd of some flying things might do across a sky of leaden hue, which, whether black as night, or snowy as silver-winged sea birds, the aroused eye cannot distinguish ere all are past, and nothing *is* again except that sky of leaden hue. And yet they have disturbed its calm and monotony. Not a word of answer had he the recollection to make, so busy was he with this wild train of thoughts; but when it had passed over, *then* the (imagined) actual nature of their connection, and his own diseased state of the imagination, induced by excess of fondness, and consisting rather of ominous fancies of *future* unhallowed fires, than any present mischief, like that sky assumed an added gloom. Fancy for the very first time had been set loose, not by his own thoughts but by her innocent fears of *utterly*

losing his affection, forcing way from her full heart. But fancy would not return to her restraint. And "*Suppose it possible she was not my daughter after all!*" This echo of her words was destined never more to be silent in the heart of Paull, idle and dreamy as they *seemed*, till that agitated heart found a sweet or dismal rest—the rest of love's haven or life's end.

CHAPTER VII.

And she, beside her, with attention spread
The decorations of the maiden dead. CRABBE.

MR. LLEWELLYN desired, as the first step, to learn the state of Ruth's heart toward the youth whom we may continue to call her cousin. To ascertain this he took what was perhaps the wisest course; he promoted a greater intimacy between his own daughter and her, not doubting that the latter would quickly betray to her friend and bedfellow (for he almost forced her to make a home of his house, for a time) what she might hesitate to avow to him. The result, however, from the singularity of the situation (of course unknown to the kind hearted pastor) proved the source of complete delusion. The young woman was already aware that Ruth had been a playfellow for a time with her cousin, and had been on the point of marriage with him, if not still so, though the time had been repeatedly deferred.

To conceal the passion of love, even when toward a worthy and approved object, seems almost an instinctive impulse in the young and modest female. Hence, not even to this artless girl did Ruth do more than joke about her feelings, when betraying as she did even to her artlessness that powerful passion, which in such temperaments, especially when joined to such secluded habits as were this solitary orphan girl's, exhibits itself under the form of melancholy. Indeed, it might be doubted whether this passion, however cognizable by others, was not inhabiting her bosom under a complete disguise even to herself. However this might be, Kitty, the friend, when she learned that this cousin, this former playmate, was really an object of her esteem and great regard, very naturally imputed to him alone all the inquietude, the sudden sighing, the love of loneliness that marked her friend's manners; and never doubting the fact of her extreme love for him, believed that some secret embarassment, or dread of the match being broken off, was the only source of these symptons.

Mr. Llewellyn having in an easy way elicited this conviction of the girl, from her common conversation, resolved to adapt his promised advice accordingly.

Like most persons who solicit advice on any question connected with strong feelings on their own part, Marmaduke Paull had rather wished a supporter of his already formed resolution, than a guide, when he applied to the worthy priest. Probably he sought more than sanction of, even coercion to, that parental course, which, though resolved on, he wanted firmness to adopt; this coercion would be supplied in the co-operation of so venerated a man, and thus prevent further procrastination of his nephew's happiness, of whose right to complain Marmaduke was painfully conscious.

Hence, it was with very slight emotion that he received Mr. Llewellyn, coming to him one bright day, as he sate in the sun, on a sod hillock open to the sea, though aware that he came to decide the point as to the marriage of Ruth. Mr. Llewellyn conceived that the transition to the conjugal, and to the maternal, state in his daughter, would most readily banish that melancholic dream, rather than reality, of an impending hideous passion, while it would prevent all occasion for the sacrifice of her beloved society needful to his heart as that was become. At the same time, he deemed it prudent to give the father time to prepare his mind for the partial separation, by extending the interval

prior to marriage, and took upon himself to acquaint the young man with the circumstance. For William, in sullen anticipation of Ruth's retracting her consent, at least for a time, once more, remained at the farm in the vale of Conwy, while she, ashamed of her own vacillations, was not displeased to be out of the presence of an angry and troubled lover, and his yet more angry and watchful sister.

Mr. Llewellyn took care to conceal any impression he might feel, that the step he advised was rendered necessary by Marmaduke's confession of feelings, but founded his advice on the fact (such he believed it) of the young woman's languishing passion for the youth, only thwarted by her reluctance to lose the society of a lately found parent.

From the first of this interview to the last, nothing betrayed any strong emotion in the solitary man's breast, but a paleness, so marked in its steady usurpation of his whole face, through all its weather marks and bronze of climate, so nearly amounting to the complete bloodless marble hue of a corpse, that the kind pastor felt alarm; but checked himself, in the very motion of his tongue to inquire if he was ill, from fear of embarrassing him, his blindness allowing his visitor fuller scope for unchecked

observation of that ghastly change of countenance.

Ruth had been often on the point of breaking the promise she had made to her dying foster-mother, while yet living with Marmaduke in the midst of smiling scenery, where all tended to banish the dreary and dark impressions of her earlier days, and the remembrance of that unhappy victim of too fond and faithful a heart. But now that she again moved in the same wild and solemn scenes, inhabited the very house of death, except while visiting the vicar's family — now that a melancholy too much akin to what she had witnessed and pitied in her, was settled down over her own young heart and mind, all was revived—Ruth Woolstoncraft was become again almost the desolate and imaginative creature of early sorrow and solitude, that watched eternally from a wild shore, a wilder sea, for an imaginary father. It was natural that now, sharing somewhat of the pains, she should pity more, and respect more, the dying charge of that hapless woman, who at once protected, and blighted, and perverted to dreary romance of character her own youth. Though still associating with Marmaduke, and sometimes permitted to lead him still, she was conscious of a cold restraint in his manner, for

which her innocent mind had not the remotest suspicion of a cause. This, joined to his final formal sanction to her marriage, confirmed her belief that her society was no longer much solace to him; and from the time of the clergyman's giving his "casting vote" on that measure, Ruth's state became one of deep, though closely secreted dejection.

The common gossip and "news" of such a lonely seaside locality is of a solemn and sad cast, widely differing from those of inland dales. Wrecks, and dead men, and new-married fishermen lost directly after marriage, are common topics. The blowing up of a storm at nightfall has agitations for more than the insensate bosom of the high heaving sea, and produces effects by the hearth, and in the hearts of the seafaring men's kindred, not dreamed of in internal situations. The wildest midnight wind in those is but wind-beaten-roof, noise, and a shaken casement, but here shakes nerves and sets hearts beating awfully, while a cry of the lost is listened for and fancied in its resistless rushing from the open sea.

Ruth loved more than ever to listen to the wild tales and fancies, imported from other parts or home-begotten, which the fisher wife, occupying a hut on the beach side called "the

Marsh of the Monks," a poor widow, widowed by the element almost washing her threshold still, loved to tell, as told before by her husband, long ago drowned. From her she heard some of those superstitions, of common Celtic origin with the Welsh, which prevail in Britany, that province so kindred in its features and its language to her native mountains, and full of antiquities of similar Druidic origin. On the eve of the day of All Saints, the souls of all persons that have died by shipwreck, of all the unrestored dead, of all still rolling as skeletons or bony atoms in the bosom of the deep—all these congregated souls arise to the surface, passing and repassing in mighty crowds, but slight and fragile in their aerial shrouds, as that topmost sea-foam which the wind's fury snatches from the crest of a wave when breaking over a reef or assaulting a headland, and whirls for a moment to deposit again in the gulf whence it was produced. These, thus skurrying about in the troughs of the sea, are seeking the souls of kindred lovers or spouses; every billow is the hearse of a soul, and when a meeting occurs, a plaintive sound is to be heard, mixed with that of the sea, but the succeeding wave dashes the commingling spirits asunder again, like that mere snowy froth, and

thus at last this melancholy "gathering" or ghostly "feast of souls" is dispersed, and its usual dead loneliness returns to the awful Bay des Trépassés (Bay of Departed Souls). Such was one of the mournful imaginations that from early childhood had possessed the mind of Ruth, familiar to most coasts where wrecks are of frequent occurrence; and neither that bay of Armorica, nor that shore of the same province, known by the name of Cornwall, on which it is situated, exceed in mournful grandeur or solitude the part of this horn of the Bay of Beaumaris on which she was born. On the green landward slope of either Orme's Head, or on the dark green morassy sod between, she could sit a whole day together, tending the few sheep of Alice, from the sun's rising to its setting, and see nothing but that sun; hear nothing but the mighty murmur of the expanse it travelled over, unless a sea-gull and its cry, or a sail whitening at soundless distance, like that wild bird's wing, or the bleat of her own sheep.

All these old tyrannies of superstitious melancholy now resumed their sway with tenfold force over her mind, in the agitated interim of preparation for a loveless marriage. And it happened that the indulgence of them gave rise

to a very atrocious rumour against her and her supposed father. The wild youths to whom William had in his fury so rashly entrusted his purpose of redress, presently propagated a report of a dreadful passion, existing on the side of the latter at least, which prompted his refusal of his daughter's hand. Whoever believes those in the higher spheres of life to be the most addicted to scandal, probably is little acquainted with the peasantry of any country. No sooner is a rumour (the more revolting the keener the zest of its welcome) originated, however vile, than it is propagated by those at the plough, and those at the loom, by hedge-side and on the village green, with as much avidity, merely for the excitement sake—as can be, or ever could be the trip of some envied court beauty, or sanctified monitor in high life; even they who sincerely regret the shame of the parties, being unable to conceal it, or at least let the scandal stand still, but pass it on, from the same foolish love of surprise and surprising others.

Now it happened that our humble heroine had more than once betrayed an anxiety to conceal the nature of some sort of needlework which she often pursued, sitting under a tree or hollow bank's shade, while watching a cow

or two graze, or sometimes in the shadow of rocks, on the beach, when the persecution of the noonday flies would drive the cattle thither, all standing motionless on the sands, preferring not to eat, to eating in their company on the marsh. She had been observed to huddle away her work on some linen into her basket of rushes, or move away with it, when some female neighbour approached. The gentle girl was drooping, wan, even sunken eyed, in her embarassment between deceiving her dear Marmaduke, and violating the last wish of the dying—the last degree of cruel impiety, in the universal opinion of the Cambro-British rural population, even to this day. The wild infamous whisper caused even those who loudly exclaimed against it, to watch very narrowly the pair so scandalized, and this privy preparation of some linen necessary, could not but quicken the eye of such observation. All things put together, and seeing that some mystery did exist, it was no such extravagant, however cruel, a suspicion that a fatal passion had subsisted on one side or both, that the consequence was impending, that this closely concealed handiwork was of the kind that provident mothers prepare in good time; to which was added the fear that the simple sea-faring youth, come

home to turn farmer, was likely to become the protector of a pretended premature spurious offspring, too horrible to be expressed but by shrugs, and knitted brows, and uplifted eyes.

The modest and virtuous daughter of the rural clergyman did nothing but cry when this dreadful rumour reached her. She was of a character quite alien to the passionate tenderness, and spiritualized dreaminess of the orphan child of the Orme's Head solitude—the perplexed love-devoured, yet all-innocent *woman* of a heavy secret, and hopeless future, deceiving alike him she loved at least as fondly as a daughter could, and the youth, whom (though not a cousin) she valued as a friend even more than as a relation.

Kate (or Kitty, as her father liked best to call her,) had herself observed this secresy in Ruth, about some work she was busying herself upon, and to her simplicity it seemed to fearfully strengthen the frightful possibility. She was become (as natural with solitary girls of her years) romantically attached to her new friend, whose more gifted mind and more intense susceptibility, wrought a difference, as of age, between them, though difference there was very little. She looked up to her, yielded well pleased an ascendancy to her mind, which her

friend was far from arrogating, and even unconscious of, and now, to secretly view this loved, respected companion with a dismal and foul suspicion, was too much to be borne, or smothered in her young affectionate bosom; so when Ruth once more happened to thrust into her basket (always taken on her arm when any one came near) this source of fearful thoughts, so little suspected by herself, and began plying her knitting needles, fancying Kitty not to have espied her real occupation from a distance, the poor girl stood dumb before her, her eyes fixed on the shut basket, unable to speak, and at last fell into an hysterical sobbing. The long-delayed issue of the agitated little colloquy that ensued, was a disclosure to Ruth of "the *wicked wicked* story that they have got *all about* the valley of Marmaduke's t'other farm, and even round the Creiddyn, up to Llanduddno!" as she said, crying. Nor did she omit the little secret of what she had that minute hidden, of which so much had been made by the "womankind."

This disclosure did not so much astound or incense the innocent victim of slander, as impress on her a conviction of the necessity of avowing her real situation to Marmaduke, of no longer assuming the disguise of a daughter; or,

this at least seemed to her previously overburthened mind, a fresh cause and apology for a step she was daily, hourly on the point of taking, but still dared not, could not, fearing to lose his love wholly, fearing to be disbelieved, fearing the mighty change in their intercourse, fearing she knew not what, but shrinking from the undefined future, even when something whispered her of possible vague bliss to thence (after a time) dawn on their new *strangeness* to each other's blood.

After a dumb pause, in which she held both hands of the poor pained girl, who was begging her not to think that *she* had credited the tale a moment, Ruth, opening her little basket, as soon as she could speak and weep, made the other sit down by her on the little green bank, where she had been sewing, and drew forth, *not* those little preparatives, the first defence for helpless humanity, come crying for such help, such defences from its new element (heard sorrowing as soon as heard, and seen in shivering distress as soon as seen,) but a far different and sadder something—poor humanity's very last need, and almost last gift from human hand—an almost finished *shroud*—her own!

Yet it was with no purpose of any violent deed that the melancholy girl had been thus

employed, but only that snch dismal occupation concurred with her mood, her forebodings of life blighted—perhaps ill usage from a disappointed husband, incensed at her sorrows—of probable early death—and with the dismalness of memory.

"It has been long begun," said she, sobbing, "often laid by, once I thought I 'd burn it!—it was not very long I kept that thought, (and she sighed profoundly,) and now again I do feel some pleasantness in making it ready—I 'll tell ye how I came to think on it. I watched Alice—I watched my mother, you know, Alice—all alone, two nights. The second night, *that* was a calm night—I thought I could work, and not do nothing but cry all night, so I began upon some shifts I was making (our mountain heroine, be it observed, was too *modest* to be delicate-*tongued, secundum morem* of modern city damsels) and as I looked, by our green rush taper, at that last dress of the poor soul, a queer thought took me—And *I* will have such an one too! I am sure to want *that*—these I may never—for I wished to die very much then, I felt so forsaken—you may know some time *how* forsaken! So I just knelt down by her, and reverently, as you may judge, raised her poor arm, and took pattern of the strange

ruffled shocking garment, and cut out *just* such an one, instead of the shift I was next to cut out; and I made a deal of it that very night, measuring myself—and I try it on, like a gown, when I am low-spirited, at the glass; and I can tell thee, dear girl! I think it's no such odd or wild thing at all, for a poor friendless kind of maiden to provide herself with this—nay, don't turn your head away—what is there in it? —because, who knows what coarse man-like old fish-wives, with perhaps great lubber boys in the same room almost, may lay out such poor girl in such a wild lonesome place? Why not be ready stripped, and ready drest for the earth's green bed, as well as some beds which perhaps are not half so—— "

That very evening, Ruth, writhing under the cruel wrong of that slander, and prompted by some resistless impulse besides, disclosed to the surprised clergyman the secret of her birth, and broke a promise made to the dying!

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh, let me now possession take
Of this—it cannot be a dream?
Yes!—now my soul is all awake—
These pleasures *are*—they do not seem!
And is it true? Oh joy extreme!
——— Now all I seek
Is mine! What glorious day is this?
Now let me bear with spirit meek
An hour of pure and perfect bliss.

CRABBE'S *World of Dreams.*

IF Marmaduke betrayed little emotion on forming the final resolution to give his only helpmate to another, leaving himself helpless, companionless, loveless, as sightless, his demeanour, on being astonished by Mr. Llewellyn's communication of a new state of relation to the dear object, sufficiently proved that his emotion had been all within—too mighty for outward expression, and its relief. The kind visitor found him, as almost constantly he was to be found, sitting alone, by one of those green mounds (without a *carn*, which chiefs alone could claim) with an oblong hollow, which mark the tumuli of the commonalty

among the ancient Britons, and abound on the treeless declivities of mountains near the sea, as the carn and mound together shew the site of some chief's more memorable sepulchre. —Mr. Llewellyn was shocked to see the change in his appearance, wrought by but a very few days, since his previous interview with him on occasion of tendering his advice. He slowly and affectionately broke to the altered man, whose whole aspect had assumed something of gaunt ghastliness and wildness, the extraordinary revelation of his supposed daughter. As Alice had been perfectly sensible, and her known extreme desire of offspring made it the more consistent, there could exist no reasonable doubt of the actual fact that his wife *had* thus sought to delude him, and that Ruth was not her child. The poor girl herself had indeed, in the woman's extreme apathy towards herself, a strong further confirmation of the fact, had any been required. As soon as the blind father—and no father—had time to fully grasp the whole multiform bearing of this change in his connection with his sole friend and companion—the rushing across his brain and heart of a thousand novel emotions—of mixed regret and hope, broken and repaired ties—loosed and more firmly bound affections—the *father* ba-

nished for ever—the *something*, yet undefined, of less tranquil character—by no means come to take its place, but rather somewhat of trouble, shame, and ominous fear, instead—all these, and all at once, were too much—the pallidness which before revealed inward only, was now followed by outer convulsion. "For God's sake, your hand, sir!" he said, tottering, after having leaped to his feet on receiving the information. "Darker than ever! I'm giddy!" and before the old man could prevent, he fell on his face along the green hollow, almost, indeed, "measuring his body's length" in that shallow grave indicating a real one below, thus proving the agony of his previous state, calm as it appeared, by the *shock* of its departure; of a ray of hope that the solitude, the horror of that state might yet be escaped from, and she for whom he lived, might *yet* be (under *some* mode of communion) still his life's companion.

Marmaduke had been apprised also, by some busy neighbour, of the vile slander raised against him and her, and his smothered wrath and wounded mind had not burned or ached the less for burning and aching all inwardly. The bitterness of this injustice would be rather increased by this new state of things, since such a declaration as the denial of Ruth for his own

child, would infallibly be seized on as a corroborating evidence, as if prompted by shame and fear of consequences, thus for the first time promulgated when the rumour was become rife. This idea might also have its effect in further confounding his mind on the sudden, so as to produce the violent effect just described.

When Marmaduke re-opened his eyes, on the old clergyman's sprinkling his face with water he had raised in the hollows of his hands from a small rivulet that crept by the spot, his first exclamation was, "Ah! sir, what was this you murmured in my ear? or did I dream? *Ruth* no child of mine?—Another father?—God! I can never believe it!—Not a father?"

Mr. Llewellyn felt the pleasure of a good man in this evidence of his neighbour's purity of secret mind; for grief and regret for the loss of a daughter, were the first visible signs of returning consciousness. The darker idea of some unholy flame, instead of proving its reality, by now leaping out of the sphere of troubled dreams into life, as the barrier was removed, had vanished *as* a dream; but the *father's* love, distinct and pure, survived the ordeal, and came forth mourning over the loss of its object, instead of being swallowed up in any more selfish species of passion.

A very short space of time, however, sufficed

to rouse the most violent agitation of new-born sentiments in a nature so keenly impassioned, a mind so void of all other objects, but that soft sweet one (whether daughter, or whatever else, indissolubly now twined with every thought,) a heart with all its feelings utterly unemployed, and run to waste except upon her alone. Actual terror hung over his next meeting with this dear darling of his heart, under her new strange character. For the first time (after some interval) his thoughts dared to dally with the idea of holding this object, this last light in his darkness, this sole living spring in the world's waste—by some *other* tie than the filial. So strong, however, was his horror of admitting as his bosom's guest a warmer feeling by any possibility, prematurely, that he could not bear to again meet her, without some demonstration to his own mind, of the fact newly revealed. This also he panted to acquire, that he might more effectually repel the calumny of the rustic slandermongers. A single day's inquiry made in that district among the elder people, helped to confirm the assurance he sought; for many who had not chosen to disturb the mind of the returned seaman before, now stated that a violent suspicion had always existed, that his unhappy wife had procured through the con-

nivance of a "cunning woman" and midwife, the child of some other parents, and had never really become a mother. It further was recollected that when she quite despaired of her husband's return, she had almost in terms confessed, in moments of despair and utter indifference to all things in a world she longed to leave, that she had never known the pains or joys of a mother.

The situation of poor Ruth, after having made this long delayed avowal, was pitiable. Remaining at the house of the benevolent minister, she fell into a sort of hysterical convulsed state with fever, in which she could not sleep night nor day. Mr. Llewellyn, who, in common with many of the priesthood in that day, had acquired some knowledge of medicine, proposed her seeing Marmaduke, whose anger for her long delusion of him she would have it must be implacable. But, when sitting by her bed, for she was unable to sit up, with his daughter on the other side, he would tell her that Marmaduke was coming, she covered her face, where the colour rose rapidly, with both hands, and the rustic physician (not without the tact of him of old) keeping his finger on her pretty wrist, found a furious action of its tell-tale font suddenly aroused by the announce-

ment. She could not be persuaded that he forgave her, that he would ever see her more—but from his own lips; yet she trembled, and exhibited the above symptoms at the idea of an interview under this—to *him* new species of attachment. But her most agonising suspense was on the point of her marrying William. This was the watchful Kitty's discovery. Sleep was by no means to be procured by art, soothings, or even the exhaustion of nature, without that personal assurance on both those points which she so desired. Yet the pastor's skill warned him of danger from the agitation of an interview so tender and so dreaded. Meanwhile, as no peril of life impended from this purely nervous state of over-wrought feeling and suspense, Marmaduke was not unwilling to have this breathing time (as it were) for the completion of this bosom-revolution—the rapid conversion of a father's love into something more agitating in expectation, but not yet a whit less pure, but sweetened to his very soul with the delicious feeling that *now*, how warm soever his tenderness, they need not part. Sleepless as she, but fast turning his thoughts to life and happiness again, Marmaduke revolved the fact over and over, and still could hardly receive the overwhelming wonder in his mind, that the

beautiful creature that loved him so, that he so loved, was *not* his child! Neither had she, nor (his nature so told him) would she become other than his daughter for some length of interval yet; the feeling was too rooted to be suddenly supplanted. His tender doting but brooded over the white beauty of her idea, in passionless expectation of Time's work, which might hereafter evolve thence some higher but yet unfelt rapture; as the mother-bird broods over the white passive envelope of her future offspring, in the deep tranquillity of the nest, in the coo green chamber of the moonlight foliage, without a touch of that fond perturbation, and jealous watch, she will hereafter find and keep over the little flutterer fully developed, broken forth, and become her companion.

By the advice of their common friend, at last, Marmaduke wrote as follows, and she received the slip of paper thus inscribed, with the added sanction of passing through that good man's hand; for Marmaduke had by practice preserved some power over the pen, notwithstanding his blindness.

"Daughter of my *heart* still! I have nothing to forgive. I believe you only deceived me at first, in pity to a dying woman, and afterwards

in love to me. We will not part. Nothing but the hand of death shall now divide your hand from mine, my sweet guide, my child, my all in this world. Be comforted and live for me, and so that you live *with* me, make whatever your own innocent love likes of your poor blind friend,

"MARMADUKE."

No sooner had this scrap been delivered to the poor girl in her sad vigil of a third wholly sleepless night, than the change from her tossing misery and gloom to a sweet subsidence of it all, was like that of a sea, from rolling and groaning in the evening of tempest, to settling down into such a many-coloured bed of azure green ripplings in blue morning, as the lark might almost mistake for the deep field of wavy grass and flowers where it may build its nest. After weeping and smiling at once, she folded the little note and deposited in the sweetest casket in the world, the snow of her bosom beneath the bed-clothes, and almost in the act fell into a sweet sleep, whence she did not wake till day was high on the green hill fronting the casement.

Marmaduke awaited but her restoration to sleep and quiet; then set off, without risking an

interview, on a journey, guided by little Hugh Llewellyn the vicar's boy (the *fisherman),* the object of which and its issue is shown in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

Each heart was anxious till it could impart
Its daily feelings to its kindred heart:—
* * not a day appeared,
When with *this* love they might have interfered;
Nor knew they when that passion to reprove,
Now guileless fondness, now resistless love.
So while the waters rise, the children tread
On the broad estuary's sandy bed;
But soon the channel fills, from side to side,
Comes danger rolling with the deepening tide;
Yet none who saw the rapid current flow
Could the first moment of that danger know.

CRABBE.

MARMADUKE had obtained a certain clue to the residence of a person important to his views, being no other than the ancient woman of the obstetric (also the black) art, who had been the agent in the strange yet tender stratagem of his deceased wife; one not wanting precedents excited by the same feeling, in English records. Very recently one of these

figured in our Criminal Calendar, where the child-stealer was prompted solely by such a strong desire as actuated Alice Woolstoncraft.

It was not known, however, whether Margery Foulke was still living, but her last residence was in a wild moorish part of the country many miles beyond Conwy, close to the wild village of Yspitty Jeuan, or Evan. That spot, once an hospitium of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, and a sanctuary, became afterwards, from the impunity it afforded to crime, a pestilent den of outlaws, robbers, and murderers, who issued forth to ravage the adjacent country, and secured themselves to laugh at their pursuers the moment they regained the *holy* precincts of this abominable refuge for the desperate and bloodguilty. These also had however long passed away, like the order of Knights their predecessors.

A keen curiosity, as well as the wish to make assurance doubly sure, now impelled Marmaduke towards this place, to converse with the aged woman who knew the whole early history of his dear Ruth's welcome intrusion, and to hear some particulars of his lost wife's conduct, whose fraud he could not but pity and forgive, remembering its motive, and the extreme disappointment he had not concealed from the

poor woman under his want of offspring, and female in particular.

Following the eastern side of the river Conwy, on the wilder road to Cerig y Druidion, an extensive wood received him first, smelling of firs, and cool and murmuring with profuse foliage of sapling oaks, beeches, some chesnut trees and mountain ash, the valley and river deep below, the ancient woods of Gwydir across the stream. But presently an ascent occurred, and all this sylvan smiling of landscape was exchanged for the frowning of sterile and treeless morasses, bounded only by lumpy mountains of ugly and desolate aspect. Some venerable woods at last varied the scene, a deserted mound rose green, where a castle had once stood, and thus pursuing with his young companion a track not unknown, and, though all was dusk confusion to his eyes, not without that strange perception of its changing features, so unaccountable to others, but common to the blind, Marmaduke reached the hamlet of Yspytty Jeuan, and proceeded to inquire for one Margery Foulke, an aged woman from Anglesey.

In the more sequestered parishes of Wales, persons whose change of residence brings them through and beyond an intervening town, may almost be said to "lose caste;" that is, they

are long considered as strangers there, and denizens of the dingle or hamlet they have left. They may be likened to a river which has to pass through a lake which, although only a collection of waters, as the town is of the same natives, confounds the individuality of the former. We may pursue the figure, and remark that should a darker tinge or some foulness belong to the river water, then it becomes conspicuous for some distance in the waters of the lake it sullies with its visit, although all is confusion still, and the stain soon loses its strength of dye, and at last is lost in its blending with the watery mass. Thus, if the migrating newcomer bring some ugly stain of character along, its deep dye hardly survives among the indolent and stationary rustic folk of the town, but some confused distorted evidence of it long remains. A cotter that was thatching his house first answered our traveller's inquiry, by calling to a woman.

"I say, neighbour, here 's a blind man wants that old woman that was from beyond Conwy, that went to live up the mountain among the mawn * pits, and used to read the stars—is she alive yet?

"I don't know, no loss if she be gone to her

* *Mawn* is the blacker peat deep beneath the surface of the round.

account—a sore wicked one by what we do hear! but she was not of our country. I guess she's dead, for I ha'nt set eyes on her since the Spytty boys worried and killed her black dog—if he *could* be killed and it were not 'something that *should'nt* be' in the carcase of the beast. We were pretty sore afeard to go nigh it, even to throw it in the bogwater."

"Why what was her crime? You foolish woman, you seem to know nothing about her, yet you can abuse her in her grave for what you know," Marmaduke said harshly.

Marmaduke had wholly lost the rustic 'vulgar errors' as well as dialect in his long expatriation. This, joined to that native dignity that always marks the man of powerful intellect, and that energy which equally attends the character of powerful passions and exalted thought, (for such in his unexalted sphere was the speaker,) made the housewife believe him some person of power, maugre his dusty garb, and she lowered her tones with that cunning suppleness that as readily truckles to even possible superiority, in the sturdiest rustic as in the most servile courtier.

"Well, I've nothing to say, but if the poor soul be dead, peace be to her body and soul too,

I say, if she be some 'sib' * to ye! Child-murther's a sore job, ye 'll allow, sir; and so is baptising naked new-born things ere they can be clouted, in the Devil's name instead of God Almighty's, and so making the puir craters their lives long the Devil's own:—but ye 're right enow! I know naught aboot her, not I! Be she such a curs'd un, or be she the like of us harmless folk, I 've *nothing at all to say!*"

"Murder? Child-murder? Where? When? I never heard of that round the Creiddin," exclaimed he.

"Oh!" said the youth, "but she wasn't of our side of Menai, you know. Long agone, when my mamma was alive, I can just remember her talking about the old midwife woman that always had attended her, when father had a curacy on that side o' the water, being almost ducked to death, and worried out of that country, for having killed a child, or something; and for being a witch; and for nursing a devil on her lap, in shape of a black dog, and for sinking a boat with two fishermen, by help on't, and——

"Ha! ha!" resumed the old cottage-wife with glee, "the lump of a lad knows all about it, and her *good* doings, ye see, mister Sir, whatever's your name, (and she leered arch

* Kin.

triumph at him) but I 've naught *at all* to say! the body's a stranger to we, dead or alive."

"Why she can't live on the mountain alone, she must come to some place or house?"

"Likely *so*," the woman of the wild village rejoined, doggedly. "But she 'd nah need either. She was helped from the Great House, (she alluded to the mansion of Voelas Hall, then in possession of the ancient Wynne family of Gwydir,) had goat's milk or cow's milk what she would, and oat-cake and brandy when she was almost gone o' the cold, sent up by the cowherd or the shepherd boys, going up the hill, by the good ladies. Grand folk always show their grandeurs and goodnesses to the like o' such offcast and foreigner sort of folk, because it shows the grander in *them*, seeing every body knows it 's they keeps 'em alive. Now my poor man, or I, who works at the Great House regular, may be among the bogs, or in this poor place that 's no better much, long enow ere cow-boy or swineherd stoops under our eaves, to bring a nice basket of fiddle-faddles—but, bless the grand good ladies! I 've nothing at all to say! We maun quarrel with our daily bread."

"You must go, if you're for going," said the man on the roof, "up yonder dip of the hills,

there, look *you*, my lad! You see those things like hovels on the top ridge, those are piles of peat drying, and it's all black turbary up there. But keep you along under that brow, where you see a *wood* like, but it's only deep gorse, that looks so black, and you'll find a sort of a road, and then you'll pass some *Carneddau*, graves of the ancient men, you know; then you must round that far rock, and you'll come to a great bog; mind your footing round it, and if you look well all round, (there's no trees to stop you,) where they've been digging the mawn, you'll spy a hovel, under a great bluff dingy head of half earth half dark-green rock, that hides it just like a molehill. Indeed ye'll never spy the house, only by some bit of blue smoke, in all the brown look of the hill, (it's no the hill *top* neither) and if she be dead and gone, why, it's like there'll be no smoke to see; for nobody'll live in such a house after *her*, it's only like a 'hafodty'* to say the truth. But if so be, you've only to keep down and down, through the *bwlch* that you'll see begin

* "Hafod" *summer*, "ty" a *house*. A summer-house, similar to the Scottish shealing, a temporary shelter for herdsmen and shepherds during the summer season.

there and the fine green country all shining deep down, and make for that. You 've no business this way at all, but that 's the best and clearest way you can take now ye 're here."

This "good and clear way" led the two travellers up to what a Saxon "pleasure traveller" would have fancied the very heart of the mountains, solemn from very desolation, but which was but really the wild-*ish* suburbs of the real hill top desert. As the acute lad cautiously led his companion, the latter ruminated on the imputations on this unhappy woman, which had, as usual, some grounds of truth, at least the possible and bloody portion of the scandal. The suspicion of being in compact with the Enemy of man, as well as sometimes with fairies (or the *Tylwyth Teg*), in making proselytes in the one case, and changelings in the other, did formerly attach very seriously to the innocent and needful art and practitioners of midwifery, among the mountaineers of Wales. The parties whom poverty, or other cause, had induced to resist the pleadings of nature so far as to permit this woman to transfer their new-born babe (afterwards our heroine Ruth, now at this moment timidly permitting, in her recovered state, a little better acquaintance with a passion long

opposed) privily to the residence of Alice, to be adopted as hers, escaped suspicion but for a time. The mockery of an *accouchement* could be better effected in so lone a spot, and with so lone and singular a woman, who repulsed all society, than could its reality be concealed, in that more frequented part across the bay, where the mother resided.

In short a rumour became rife, that an event which the old midwife disguised as of that premature character which gives it another name, had been a real child-birth—and, as the child had disappeared, the inference was dark against the parties, or the midwife, or both. But as some long interval occurred before accident partially betrayed the secret, no further stir was made in it; but the old woman lost at once her character and her calling. It was at the intercession of Alice, and probably, of some of her gold also, that the persecuted woman refrained from clearing herself, by producing the young girl Ruth as the vanished infant believed to have been murdered. However this was, after several visits, (probably of complaint, and demand of money for concealment,) which Ruth herself might faintly remember, as has been shown, the "cunning woman" appeared no more on that side of the Conwy, and

the time of her disappearance was, no doubt, that of her ill-usage by the mob, and driving away, alluded to by the youth.

"A wild chase this!" remarked the older traveller, when at last they surmounted the far (not furthest) ridge, and the prospect of desolate grandeur burst upon them; the black pitch-like pits of the peat soil, the dismal *harvest* of the dark brown formal *cocks* of that substance, (such a contrast to the delicious haymaking scene!) the stretching away of the treeless, hedgeless, lifeless, wearisome same of morass and russet withering green, and the reddened or yellow dead or dying fern, and some huge and unscaleable rocks, harbouring screaming kites and birds of prey, alone affording any trace or sound of life.

"A wild chase and wild place! It blows cold, and I can hear the wind whistle, as well as feel it; though I warrant there's nothing but the gorse and heath for it to make a noise *with*—but it will make us enjoy *home*, won't it, my boy?"

Marmaduke involuntarily laid a stress on the word, and laughed out the sentiment from the very exultant heart's core of him, with such a glee, as almost startled himself, and summoned his thoughts to the vale of

Conwy, *not* the mournful ill-omened home of the promontory—back to the real soft sweet object in which that burst of *home*-felt bliss (in expectation) originated,—and *yet* those thoughts were not a *lover's!* It was but the blessed ease of conscience and heart he experienced, in feeling that he might *now* vent all his fullness of fondness on that cherished creature, without a *pang*, or self-disgust, whatever might be the intoxication of the senses.

The peculiarity of being everywhere led by the hand (with its frequent pressures) of such a being, seemed to effect a sort of exchange of feelings between them, without either losing one feeling of their several own. A sweet dependence, allied to that of helpless infancy, was reciprocal.

And now in his new happiness did Marmaduke believe that he could have been quite content with the paternal and filial attachment only, could that be enjoyed without interruption.

They had met no creature in their way, even up to the moment of reaching the very rock and huge mound described as the site of Margery's house, neither had any smoke been discoverable. At last they stood on an eminence of seared sod, with huge stones and deep

gorse clumps, and which sunk abruptly before them.

"We must go back, we 're out of all track here," said the lad. "I think she 's surely dead; there was no smoke all round everywhere; and I don't know the exact spot now we 're at it, though it looked distinct as a reef out of the sea, a bit ago. "Lord have mercy on me, what 's that sound?" cried the boy, bending his ear to the earth, when he saw behind an angular bit of crag, a deep hole with stakes, whisped round with fern stalks; felt a feeble creeping up of some warm vapour in his face, invisible in the light as smoke, though smoke it was, it was so trifling; and then a voice said from under their feet, with the langour of illness, "What be ye wanting there?" the sound taking strange hollowness thus ascending out of the earth, as it were, up the aperture. The hut was in fact beneath their feet. A great weight of earth and turfs had been piled as roof to this subterranean abode, partly formed of the excavated mound, probably an ancient tumulus containing ashes of the dead, (generally to be found in these regular hillocks, with an adjacent carn, such as was seen close by,) and for the chimney or funnel use had been made of a rift in the mountain stone. A

few steps would have brought them to the brink of this wild roof, with deep gorse for eaves, beneath which was the cavern-like entrance, marked by a few white peat ashes thrown forth, a pitcher, and water dipped out of the dingy sluggish little stream, such as creeps through the soil of peat moss in such places.

They found their way off the house top, round and down and into the house itself. A shrivelled face, smoked, blear-eyed, yet deathly wan, through that mask of smoke, stain, and wrinkles, was just visible, as coming forth, disturbed, not alarmed; and a decrepit form bowed almost double with age, so that it seemed an exertion to her to raise her visage enough to gaze at theirs, came moaning towards them.

"I 've come for ye to tell my fortune, mother," Marmaduke began, jocosely, partly because he was happy, and more from an awkwardness in commencing his business. And now he begged the youth to divert himself outside, while he addressed her. But the woman was too near that grave she seemed to desire as much as to need, to be alive to jokes, or enter into the spirit of his address.

"Go, go thee ways, foolish man!" she muttered, despondently, "think ye, if I could tell

fortunes, I could not mend 'em too, somehow, —and then, would *I* be here? No more need to deceive folk now! I 'd best make my peace with Him I can't deceive."

"Let me pour you a thimble-full of rum, good dame, I 've a drop in a bottle."

"None o' your rum for me! What 's brought ye here? I can't see but just none,—was n't there two on ye? You talk like a foreigner, and are free, like a sailor-man. If ye come to tak my goods, here be none for ye; and if ye seek my life, so as ye will show the mercy you'll want some day, and stop while I say a prayer or two, mayhap ye 'll take it just as easy as my death-hour will, or easier: so it 's not much matter *what* ye want, puddering and tramping over my head. God's will be done! Lord! forgive me!"

Enfeebled in mind and frame, through solitude and sorrow and age combined, she mingled human anger with human sullen resignation. But her hearer was shocked, and by degrees, after blowing up her embers for her, and almost forcing on her a cordial, won on her so as to elicit a few answers to his questions.

"Did you know a person they called Alice Woolstoncraft—Paull was her husband's name —a man that was press'd once?"

"To be sure I did."

"Did she ever bear a child while he was off, that was christened *Ruth?* Didn't you come as midwife, Margery?"

The old woman tried to view his face.

"Who *are* you, come to tempt me to tell a lie again, and anger my God that has heard too often my curses of rage, as well as my many wicked lies? I have told *that* lie, you seem to know; but why are ye so *curst*,* now, as to want me to tell it o'er again? *She never bore babe, not she, manchild or womanchild—never!*"

A mournful, a childless pain, shot across the heart of her hearer at this full last demonstration of the fact, which had yet, but a little before buoyed that heart like a reprieve from death! His eyes swam in tears, and he was ready to ejaculate, "Farewell my *daughter!* So ends my dream of a *father!*"

And here, having brought the reader to this point, I shall for the present return to the Orme's Head, rather after the devices of my own fancy in story-telling than any more approved method, to follow the fortunes of the young woman there walking unconscious of the danger that approached her with the critical Wednesday of her (broken) engagement.

* *Cursed*, a *Welshly* term of two meanings; 1st, frowardly harsh; 2ndly, cunning or adept.

CHAPTER X.

That female form—why is she there?
Alas! I know her—Oh, begone!
Why is that tainted bosom bare?
Why fixed on me that eye of stone?
* * * * * *
As if he stood bewildered in a dream—
Or that some power had chained him for a time,
To feel a curse, or meditate a crime. · CRABBE.

As Ruth was walking alone on the down overlooking the sea, she was suddenly accosted from behind by some one, and William grasped her arm. His whole frame shook with passion as he exclaimed, "Ruth Wools'ncroft, will you keep your promise *this* time? No nonsense! Yes or No!"

Ruth was just revived after nervous confinement and debility. The sweet air of the thymy down and the fresh breeze of the sea, a blue sky, and more than all, a revived heart, fluttering with vague emotions all tender and all voluptuous—these made her frame of mind at that moment placid in the extreme, and her

bosom overflowed with love and good will to all things. Never had she felt warmer friendship for him, or less of anything akin to *love.*

"Dear William!" she said smiling, but piteous, "don't look so; would you frighten me?"

"Nor *shame* you; but compel you! Do me right! will you promise and vow to do me right?" Ruth grew alarmed, and looked around the lonely vast bank of the sea-side down, and up and down the beach below, but all was solitary. "Aye, *you* may look!" he cried, growing paler and paler with fury. "You're in my power!"

William was of quiet demeanour; she was inured to his habits at home, quite familiar, so that she soon recovered herself, and *couldn't* feel fear of him, he being not at all rash or passionate. "You would not hurt me, William?" she said with unaffected conciliatory tenderness, taking his hand. Strange little member, with thy fantastic five polypus-like feelers,—oh, hand! When delicate (a cottage girl's *may* be), when of tender touch—when warmed with the blood flowing from the heart we think ours, or pant to make so—what tongue of man or string of lyre ever possessed such thrilling eloquence? His eyes of flashing rage melted that instant, but shrunk down, ashamed to show it.

"Not a hair of your head," he murmured.

"Oh! good heaven! nor *yourself*, surely? You don't threaten to do yourself a mischief?" she exclaimed, for something of the despair of love-melancholy that moment passed so black over his countenance, as the feeling and the real thought of killing himself before her crossed his brain, that it communicated itself to her as by actual voice.

Her terror, beyond suspicion of feigning, now so affected him, that he could not speak, but only reluctantly drawing back his hand, shook his head, while the high heave of his breast and deep groan rather than sigh, seemed to say—"My life that you will not share, why should I value?"

At last he faltered—"If my living *is* of consequence to you, *dear* girl, why—" he could not finish the sentence, or pride rose again to prevent. "I speak truth," he resumed more calmly, but stern, "and tell you again, *you're in my power*. Will you fulfil your promise?"

"I cannot—I cannot, dear good William!" she said, bursting into tears of pity for him.

"You *will* not, you mean?"

"Be my brother, my dear friend, and I'm sure I can be your loving sister, your fond

friend; I *am*, William—anything you wish, in that comforting way—but I *cannot, will* not be your wife, William; if you hurl me down to that shore of stones, I cannot, so it's *no* use!"

With quivering lip, betwixt crying and passion, he looked black melancholy with fierce resolve full in her face.

"By the living God up there! and by holy church! and by the hours we spent together when younger, and all the hopes I've built on you of a happy life,—you swear by all these you will not be moved by one or all, to do me justice, to keep your promise?"

"Forgive me!" she said, now in the utmost trepidation; "don't be rash—at least, let me see my Mar—my father again; he's on a journey."

"Woman, I but ask you, did you speak as in God's presence these words, that you *will* not be my wife?"

"If you kill me—yes! I will *not* deceive you again, if I die for it—yes! I thank you from my heart for having this fondness for me! I cherish you for it,—fear for you like your own sister, and if you murder me *now*, I forgive you *now*, and God forgive you! and still

I say *never*, William! Before God I said and say—I cannot be your wife, *poor* William!"

William took a turn, fumbled for something in his breast, then revealed his face to her again; but the hand she thought to see clutching some deadly weapon, but held a handkerchief to his eyes, while the other seized her's and kissed it—"And I *am* your *poor* William yet? Pity's poor fare in place of love, yet thank ye for even that, sweet Ruth! For ever, and for ever then, good-bye, Ruth—and now, forgive *me*. I said you was in my power; thank God you are! for I'll save you."

The remorse-stricken young man with irresolute purpose had hurried to her neighbourhood to at least be present, so as to prevent any brutal treatment during her abduction. But her innocent looks, her tenderness, her unprotected state, inspired a better, nobler purpose—to save her from his own machinations. He told her all—the boat and its crew that would be moored to receive her, the hour, and how to avoid the ambush laid for her.

If William was not to know a transport of warmer, yet one of some pure feeling, generous, melting, mournful, scarcely less delicious, was at least his own on this occasion, while the young pair of fond *friends* at least, now ex-

changed mutual forgiveness; she for his purposed cruelty, he for her breach of promise; and he talked as anxiously about preserving her from those ruffians as if he had never been the head of their councils. He was too well acquainted with David Shakerly's suspicious character to confide in his obedience to himself, although engaged in his cause, when once in action and pouncing on the prey, like a vicious hound that will not be called off from the deer when it has seized it, however docile before.

William had come provided, therefore, with a brace of pistols he had brought from sea, and was now lurking long before the appointed hour, on this side of the bay (Beaumaris), while the confederates believed him waiting them on the other, at the church of the sea-side village. But he also was in turn deceived. For Shakerly had formed a villainous design of making the prize his own, when once in a boat on the lonely great waters, and conveying her to some other part of the coast. Their boat was already stealing along the edge of the calm sea, and he and another prowling about the peninsula, designing to seize her on the first opportunity of surprising her alone.

As they walked together, William now produced the deadly weapons, showed her they

were loaded, and dallied with a sort of sad pleasure he found in her terror, by pointing one at his own forehead, in half melancholy sport, half inward dreadful earnest. She wept, and spoke with all the softness of tenderness; and pleased, though not deceived into hope, William bore to walk with her hand in hand.

The discovery of her being no relation to Marmaduke, the latter had desired to be concealed till after his journey, that he might have the power to assert it on some ground of his own knowledge, beyond that of Ruth's assertion of Alice's dying declaration.

It was directly after this display of the pistols, and their beginning to walk hand in hand, that they suddenly, by rounding a little point of green rock, met Marmaduke and his young guide coming home.

"Whose voices are those? That crying one is Ruth's, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes, it 's Ruth and William *Pont Porthlywd,* (thus every dweller in rustic Wales takes a surname from his hamlet or his domicile,) Willy and Ruth hand in hand."

There was a squalid neglect of person, with wildness of look in Marmaduke, even before the boy thus spoke, that caught the alarmed notice of Ruth, as contrasted with even his

state before her divulging the secret—the only state she had yet seen him under, for his subsequent great change to placidity Ruth knew only by report of her friend Kitty; they, it will be remembered, never having met in their new relative condition.

"Damnation! what d' ye mean, boy? That low lover-talk! Hand in hand?" he said in a voice of thunder, springing forward, directed by the young man's voice saying "Uncle"—and with his hand in one moment at his throat —"Scoundrel, I'll make ye remember—if ye forget, and think—if because I'm a poor blind wretch——But you shall know I've boarded battle-ships sword in hand, and been boarded —blood! I 'll have your heart's blood!"

"Let go, uncle! what ails you? I've no heart to quarrel."

"Oh, my dear, dear Marm——" "It 's your *daughter*, sir——" "It 's your daughter and her sweetheart, sir!" cried William and Ruth and the terrified boy, all together, and almost in the same instant.

Marmaduke loosing his grasp, and his mad face settling down into a black melancholy so calm that it could smile, said, "Thanks for that word, my good little boy—'pon my soul, nephew Will, I 'm sorry—*oh* Ruth!—But I

was n't *jealous—jealous!* You daren't say *that.* I was taken by surprise. *Oh,* Ruth! What in the devil's name do ye here together? Oh, Ruth!" The interjected, groaning, call on Ruth came dismal as the measured toll of a passing-bell.

Ruth was nearly fainting; the young man upheld her, and that action roused her, for she instantly advanced to lean upon the distracted man, who, softly, with a rueful look (for look it seemed, so tenderly earnest was the rolling of those dim eyes on her face,) fixed on her, softly resigned her again to the support of William.

"You frighten us, dear uncle! what 's in your head? what 's bursting in your breast? Good God, how he pants! Sit down on the ground, my good uncle."

"Hell! hell! *not* its fire, I hope!" said Marmaduke, wildly striking that head and that breast. "I must be left by myself to recover myself. For God's sake! take her to the parsonage, *both* of ye. Boy, go along with 'em. Say I implore Mr. Llewellyn to take tender care of her."

Ere one of them could answer, he disappeared in the direction of the loneliest woods of the peninsula, with which he was well ac-

quainted. His tone and looks were of that stern determination that foretold fury if thwarted by one word, and they all stood looking wistfully after him, but not daring to follow.

"Oh, we had the nicest journey," the youth said on their way homeward, "*going*, he was happy! Bought me all sorts of things at Conwy, and we told stories to beguile the way; but when he'd been to that horrid old woman's —all was over. Oh, how pale he did look when he came out of her underground house to what he was when he went in; for I waited outside. All the way home he 's hardly said a word. Once he was in a passion with me for just nothing, then he begged pardon of me—of *me!* And then he gave me all the rest of the cakes and everything he'd bought, all at once, to make it up. Only two or three words, he did nothing but mutter to himself, 'God is just, and merciless,' and sometimes, 'The hand of God is in this; I 'm justly punished!'"

And here, to explain this sad change, we must revert to what passed in the mountain-moor-del-hut, taking up the narrative broken off at the words of the superannuated woman:—

"Alice Woolstoncraft never bore babe, manchild, or womanchild, never!"

After the mournful pause already mentioned,

poor Paull's long farewell to the father-feeling, he quickly revived, and with a trembling of anxious curiosity said,

"And now, as you see I know every thing else—how you brought a child across the Bay, a new-born one, for that poor creature, to pass off on me, for her's and my child—"

"*Your's* did ye say? Then you're the husband come back?" She interrupted him, but with torpid indifference. "I did hear some talk of his being come home, or dream it, methinks—and *you're* he, are you? Yes, we meant to cheat you—but you came too late—well, well! it's all one now."

"And *now*, dear good woman, tell me who were the parents who could part with that beautiful poor naked thing, and let you bear it off in a boat over waves and—who was her mother? who was the father?"

The woman seemed, or was, of great age; but long living alone, and that loathsome sort of despair that froward minds, when worldly hope is quite gone, sink into, and long habit of hating mankind for having imputed to her crimes beyond what she had ever contemplated—all these tended to shut her up, as it were, with her evil and wretched self, thus to give added appearance of a near departure from a world

she loathed, and its creatures that she shunned and was shunned by.

But his last question seemed like the spear of Ithuriel to conjure up the whole fierce woman, beneath this living shell or coffin, as such a ruinous carcase might be almost called, and to his question, "who was the father?" — "I 'd bless God yet before I die, if man or devil, black art or black dog, would tell me *that!* Yet, God take me," she added with dropt voice, looking at her two arm-bones loosely lapped in sallow shrivelled skin (for such the two arms she held up appeared) now trembling with passion, and curving the long-nailed fingers, with the action of a hawk's foot just clutching a prey, as expressing their readiness to tear out the eyes of the object of her long deliberate rage of revenge, burning yet under ashes,—"God take me! helpless wretch that I am, what could *I* do, if I *was* told?"

"But you knew the *mother?*"

"Aye, I ought to know—my *own only child,* I ought to know! And a good girl, and good to me till—"

"*Your* own, was it *your* daughter?—My God! are you my Ruth's grandmother then? —and shall we never know who—"

"What could *I* do if I *was* told?" her hol-

low now horrid voice kept reiterating to herself, her hands now clenched into two trembling impotent fists, and her toothless gums working like the jaws of ruminating beasts, only more rapidly—with the action, as impotent of purpose—of a raging gnashing of teeth.

"But the *mother—your* daughter—does *she* live?"

"No, no!—she's in her dry bones, poor creature, and I *here* in the flesh—such flesh as *this* is—against right course of nature," and she grasped up the whole remaining muscles of her left arm between her thumb and finger—"She did not desire to live—and *I, I* was cruel to her —*that's* the curse on me!"

"What was your daughter's name?—where lived she?"

"Elizabeth."

"Ha!" *Something* struck the mind of her now trembling interrogator, which allowed but this interjection and instantly plunged him into dumb deepest reverie. His heart began to palpitate most violently, a dizzy whirling of a moment seized his brain, his very knees knocked together; some fatal past, known only to himself, was presented, like a phantasma which some evil worker, or that human ruin herself, as a demoniac sorceress, conjured up to

stand like his own black death-scaffold before his mind's eye. Conscience took the alarm, and all was dismal as death and the judgment itself shadowing his soul could make it, in that pause. Suddenly he burst forth "Elizabeth *Foulke!* Your name's Foulke? Betsy *Foulke.* I thank God!" But she was muttering in her stupidity of exhaustion after such a rage, long unawakened, though never dead, and noticed not his words,

"Yet who could *not* be cruel? *She,* my only help, came home crying, blushing, hiding her head, poor creature! and instead of helping me, must have help—I was old, old *then!* If that had been all! But she came to shame me—to bear a bastard to call me Granny, to be dragged up through years of our poor helpless selves only, and never a father to 't. For never would the poor ruined creature tell me who was its father, and she *never* told! 'Twas enough to make me cruel, make me mad, was'nt it? The soft creature that did never know will but mine before, to refuse to tell, when it was what would have taken the charge off me, and got the little torment a man's protection? But she was always shamefaced, dear child! and it 's my belief it was some married man was the dog—all the plagues of hell follow him! But she said it

were no good to tell, for he would never be seen more—she should never see him more! and then she fell into 'sterics. 'Curse him!' said I, "who brought this upon two lone women!' and I'd have had her said Amen! but 'I *won't*, mother, if I *die!*' said she. 'Out with ye then into the snow, with that harlot *shape*, and lye-in there,' God pardon me! I've said, and she'd sit crying outside our threshold —'Will ye *tell*, to come in? Will ye *curse* him, to come in, out of the sleet and snow?' —'I *can't* mother! and the sooner it freezes *me* to the heart the better!—only for my poor unborn thing's sake, let me in, mother!' *So* we went on! So we went on!"

"Wretch! did you leave her to perish in the snow?"

"Wretch in your own teeth!" retorted the wretched woman, her dormant nature now roused—"did I say such a thing? I lay on our earth floor that she might lie on the one bedstick I had, and all I could get her I got: but I had planned what to do with the brat ere it came. For many a time did your poor wife (if you *be* the man) come to consult me, the 'cunning woman' as they called me, about her misfortune, as she called it—in not having family like other wives, and asking about

'charms' and the like lies and vanities, to make an alteration, and she was for ever fancying herself in the way to be happy, and she'd cry and say she knew her husband would soon cease loving her unless— "

"Margery *Foulke is* your *certain* name, is 'nt it?" asked Paull again, inattentive to her words.

"Aye, aye, poor old Madge Foulke's my name. So she 'd cry, and when the man was off, how she did take on, because he 'd come and find no hope of a little one!—Now when my poor child was in that way, to her sorrow and mine—I bethought me what it was to be rich, and what a pity it was 'nt that foolish wife that was pregnant, in place of my one poor lamb of my bosom. And it was *I* did put the thing in her head, and *I* did scheme every thing, and I'll say so to the man her husband if he were ever to come back at last. I 'm afeard of nothing alive and nothing dead! And did somebody say he *did* come back? Did I dream *you* are the very man, I see so dim through a fog there of my old eyes, blind of smoke, and tears too in their time? To be sure! who else was I talking to?"

"Where died she, this unhappy Elizabeth *Foulke?*" Paull now asked, who had not ceased

to tremble during this burst of her long-pent burthens of memory.

"Betsy OLIVER! that was *her* name—'*Betsy the* BEAUTY!' God help our prides, poor idiots! proud I was *once* of that name—proud of her that was to be my shame. I 've had two husbands, man, but never a babe of my body but her, and some villain unknown made me curse myself that I had not been barren, as that woman."

"No more!" Paull cried out in a voice of desperation, "I won't hear any more!—Ruth *is* my daughter! Heaven! Heaven! why have you avenged the wrong of the mother, through *such* an instrument? Why none but my own child?"

The old woman's torpor of all perceptive faculties, had the same effect as deafness, so she went on regardless.

"And never was that unknown rascal that my poor child loved so, the man to help us, to once send to her, to once see her more, when she was dying, worn to a skeleton, of a decline as they called it at Beaumaris. Never did he so much as——"

"I *couldn't!* I *couldn't!* ye unjust dotard," he broke forth, "I was pressed, forced away

—was'nt I? I didn't even know—God's my witness!—that the poor girl was in such situation—I confess I wished it—I wished for a female child. Bitterly I 'm cursed in that wish! Oh, I could *yet* have been blessed in it, yet have loved as a father, before this cursed sensual dream of these last few days—*now*, never more!"

Each was too self-engrossed now to much regard the other. The childless woman only looked at him bewildered, when she caught the sound of his lapse of speech into the first person; but the idea was too confusing, of his being also the seducer of her child, for her feeble mind to catch it distinctly: but as if some vague reflection of such idea struck her,—she again bent her grisly skeleton hand into that bird-like attitude, and said, "Aye, it was my pride to hear 'the Beauty' and 'the Beauty' ——and to look on it! Oh, may the eyes never, never see heaven that looked on that beauty, to lust after it, and to hunt after it, and hunt it even to death! Would to God they were in the reach of these five *claws*, even these!"

"God has revenged you better with the fire of his heaven!—they are already gone!" Mar-

maduke groaned, his blasted balls rolling and working fearfully in his head, within reach of her impotent and shaking hands.

Careless to deny or reveal himself, Paull shook down what money he had about him, and feebly saying—"You shall not want—help shall be sent to you!" rapidly groped his way to the outside, and reappeared to the astonished boy, coming forth as changed, to as deadly a degree and manner, as pallid, silent, and dismal of whole aspect as those re-emerging from the cave of Trophonius, according to Grecian traditionary lore.

The voice of that woman had been indeed to him an oracle ominous of death. The past few days, which had brought a sort of new birth, along with Ruth's novel confession, had rendered it, *now* at least, impossible for his ardent yet delicate nature to resume the *father*, with common peace of mind. His mind was, by this new light cast on his innocent daughter's actions, made anxious about the real nature (however concealed from herself) of her strong attachment to him, while thus, in secret, so long fully convinced he was no relation to her. Could he have entered her pure virgin mind and heart, he would have had small ground of that shuddering feeling for her, which now pos

sessed him: but men can hardly conceive the degree to which tenderest ardours and white-thoughted innocence can be blended, in female hearts and minds wholly untampered with by temptation.

CHAPTER XI.

How glare his eyes, and yet he's not awake:
And as he grinds his teeth, what noise they make!
See what cold drops upon his forehead stand,
And how he clenches that broad bony hand!

CRABBE.

WILLIAM had no sooner placed Ruth in charge of the good vicar, (the hour of the expected ambush laid for her not being yet come,) than he set forth in friendly anxiety to watch the steps of Paull. He came at last to what is called the "Marsh of the Monks," near to which was a small melancholy boggy pool, over which weeds were spread, and some reeds and rushes whistled shrill, and the bulging of the ground all about, clothed with a sear and withered sod, marked the now pure, and green, though sad-coloured, no longer pathetic tombs, of many dead.

The absence of stones and sculptures—of all memorial but what Nature seemed to have long reclaimed as her own,—a mound and a sod for flocks to graze over, removes these graves almost

out of the jurisdiction of *The* Grave, to the imagination. The little black earth which was so long ago *Man*—and the calcined relics of the clay and heaped fuel with which that human antiquity was, so long ago, consumed—though discoverable on ransacking *this* purified sort of sepulchre, are rarely present to the fancy; and were they even to the eye, the marks of fire, the all-purifying element give a delicate cha racter to decay, and festering mortality is no more detected noisome to thought below, than is human mourning to be found dismal to the sense above. For those whose last sigh was breathed before the first Cæsar's first breath was drawn—whose sleep in the semi-immortality of ashes had been long and sound, when the Roman hosts first trampled their daisied bed,—for those "auncient men," smiling up grim scorn of Roman, Saxon, Dane, with all their insolence and might, and murders—for *those,* their fellow men of *to-day* forget to mourn even as mortals. Death and Time together have wrought a sort of apotheosis, of which the *carnedd* and the wild and lone green tumulus, seem but symbols, or shrines of Nature's workmanship, rather than men's hands.

And in one of the russet hollows of these solemn risings of the earth, lay sleeping close

by the small rushy pool, the exhausted form of Marmaduke Paull. As the young man watched his sleep a minute, he perceived that sleep, like man, is but a half-friend, if not an enemy to the wretched. His frequent twitching of face and limbs, and his agitations even while fast asleep, proved the passions still preying on him even in the darkness of the shut-up senses, like living persons close imprisoned in the house of the plague, yet still heard dreadfully moving and mourning among the spotted dead within, or even heard hollowly to curse or pray, though all outwardly appears as a house shut, ruinous, uninhabited.

Before William could recover from the surprise of seeing him thus unexpectedly, Paull started to his feet, not from being awakened, but in some frightful dream; for his words were part of one, though his eyelids were uplifted, and his eyes stared seemingly awake. But he quickly discovered the presence of some one; William then accosted him, and he exclaimed wildly——

"How long have you been watching me asleep? Dreams are Nature's, not ours. How dare you, Sir, pry into my brain and breast, when exhausted Nature——what have I been saying? Where 's she? Have patience, boy!"

His nephew having soothed him as well as he could, Ruth became the subject of their speech. Paull seemed resolved to drop in eternal oblivion his last discovery, and let the fact stand simply that he was the real father, without the now fruitless avowal (at least to William) of the fate of the mother.

"No, uncle," the youth said, in answer to his promise of Ruth's hand without further delay—"no! that 's all over. She does not, cannot love me, and I've come to better thoughts than to take her without a heart. But the puzzle to sister and me is, who *has* her heart?—for sure as I am no more than a friend or brother to her, there's somebody, somewhere, is *more*."

Marmaduke groaned, "How know you or your sister that?" he inquired.

"Oh, I don't mean that she has confessed it, nor that she is like a wanton girl, dreaming about a sweetheart; but there's sure to be somebody that has got possession of her whole thoughts and whole feelings, and every wish of her soul, uncle, you may depend on it. God knows, it may be as innocently as a young mother lives in her first little one, that she nurses and watches all day, and then does the same all night in her dreams; but still I love

her too well to marry her in that state; for, as sister Sophy says, how could I bear to see it, after bringing her home?"

"The more reason, boy; the more reason for your being married quickly," Marmaduke murmured. "I bless God for this proof of your having a real love for my poor, poor—"

As William waited an explanation of these words, a cry of distress grew upon the breeze, with a rapidity that proved the person in terror to be running swiftly, and Ruth the next moment came flying, pursued in that lonely part, whither she had come in her anxiety to find her father, by David Shakerley and another, who had anticipated, as has been hinted, the hour appointed.

"Oh, save me, William, save me!" she cried out; then seeing her father, "oh, thank God! save me, Marmaduke! *you* here! oh, no; you're blind; let 'em take me; don't strive with them, Marmaduke!"

"The devil! *you* here?" the ruffian exclaimed, seeing William, whom he believed to be on the other side of the bay.

The distracted girl, meanwhile, had thrown herself on her father's neck, and William, planting himself direct in the path of the pursuer, said, "Stop, I command you, David

Shakerley! I'll pay your trouble; back! all 's well."

The harsh-featured, sturdy fellow, bent his brows on the youth of much slighter make, while he stood recovering his breath a moment, armed with a bludgeon, and drest in his best sailor clothes, but ready to convert his parley into a rush upon his repentant accomplice. With his comrade to aid, he was, however, so sure of mastery over a rather delicate youth and a blind man, that he seemed willing to pause, and only fixed a grim smile upon the shamed and now trembling young man—trembling for her and perhaps his endangered uncle.

Ere Ruth could recover breath to explain that she had been seized by one of them, but extricated herself, with loss of part of her dress, to which her torn clothes and flying hair fallen bore witness, she fainted away; and in that moment Shakerley sprung forward to seize her, as the father was in the act of laying her along the sod, a posture effectual in relieving fainting. To him all was obscure, of course, except that his child was in danger of violence, and had flown to his bosom.

William, now driven to the last desperate means of averting the peril he had brought on one he loved, once more threw himself between

the ruffian and his prey, pulling forth one of his pistols, and pointing it at his breast. The fellow, however, aimed a rapid blow at his arm, which, descending full on his hand, hurled the weapon to the ground, which exploded harmlessly with the stroke. The distressed father, meanwhile, could only hold his child firmly, half reclining on a hillock, half in his arms, groaning agony over his own helplessness; but William, now stopping the villain, but still dragged along by the hold he kept of his collar, and hugging him to obstruct the use of his bludgeon, contrived to pull out with his disengaged hand the last pistol, at sight of which, the other, but a lad, though sturdy, recoiled from dragging at William by his coat skirt, and retreated till he saw the issue of this reinforcement of fire-arms.

The report of the first pistol had roused the fainting girl, and she now stood tottering to watch with frantic eye and dreadful screams, a deadly struggle for a loaded and ready-cocked weapon, between the two young men unequally matched.

"Do they fight? Is William down? Terrible curse of God, that I can't see where to help! but I won't leave *you*;" were the broken exclamations of the father.

"Help! or she 's lost and I 'm a dead man! he 's got my pistol! help! help! or she 's lost!" now cried the unfortunate victim of his own rushing upon a wild justice, as now, only able to clog a little longer the stronger arm of his opponent by clinging about him, and the other ruffian now returning to the charge, he rolled his eye, as he could catch a moment, piteously toward the pair, impotent as childhood to his rescue. Yet, not so; for the weaker of the two, strong in the tenderness of her heart as much as desperation, sprung forward and commenced such an eager though ill-directed aid of the overpowered youth, whom she expected every moment to see shot through the heart or brain, as little accorded with her figure and palsied quietness of the minutes previous. But Paull now missing his charge, and thus relieved from his post, was among them, blind as he was, almost in the same moment; and with that wonderful tact in the blind which converts touch, and perhaps hearing, almost into a sort of substituted sight, darting his strong hand first to the mouth of the ruffian, directed by a blasphemous oath thence bellowed at the moment, ran it along and down his arm to his armed hand like lightning, and crying out, "Ruth, Ruth, go behind me! *both* go!" in

dread of the pistol going off, a hand of each now grasping the tube, and straining to turn it back toward the other's breast, (for the fury of the wretch was now roused to the bloodiest pitch to be baffled by a blind man,) strength, or strength of rage under wrong, prevailed, and the master-hand of Paull constrained the hand even yet possessing the weapon to discharge it toward its holder, whom it wounded in the knee.

William, who had employed the minute or two of this conflict in withholding Ruth, by main force only, from helping her father, now the worst danger was over flew to his aid.

"Let *me* alone with him, lad," said Paull, who did not know of the shot having taken effect; and grasping the growling wretch, too sturdy to submit, by the throat, he now, thus having gained fair hold of his object, mastered him with the power of manhood over infancy, and shaking him violently the whole way, dragged him to the brink of another deeper bog, with which his frequent soundings with his staff had made him well acquainted. Here, such was the strength that aroused feelings rather than muscular vigour gave, he actually inverted his now silenced foe in a minute, and dipped him, thus suspended by the legs, over and

over in the pitch-like semi-fluid, which weltered, exposed by previous removal of some two feet of the face of the ground, more firm by plant-roots and fibres of herbage.

Shakerley, now roaring for mercy each time he re-emerged, which the fierce misery, joined to fury of the other, seemed indisposed to grant, at last stooped to appeal to Ruth, who, true to her sex's placable openness to such appeals, supplicated for him. Paull's mercy, however, extended only to tossing him like a carcase into the midst of the liquid bog, whence his wounded knee, bleeding within the mire, hardly allowed his floundering so far back as to be about knee deep. There, his accomplice having decamped, he was compelled again to make his intended victim his intercessor, by disclosing to her the state of his knee.

William extended a hand to drag him forth. "Into the sea with him!" was Paull's only pity. But the gentle girl in the same moment was seen rending quite off a hanging large portion of her gown, which these ruffians had torn, to bandage the wound of even the more ferocious of them.

Marmaduke turned to her in the act of applying it to the bleeding limb, with her own yet trembling hands, with a face of tender ad-

miration; though for himself, his heart could have allowed *his* hand to tear up the wound, he did not the less feel the moral beauty of the act. The saddest effect of misery is perhaps the fierceness it creates in the gentle, the pitiless character it imparts to the once piteous, bosom.

The escaped man was probably gone to apprise his fellows lurking under Llanduddno rocks, and to heave off their boat for escape. The maimed one was left, secure in his lameness, till proper measures should be taken for disposing of him.

After recovering breath, the three friends took the way to the parsonage. None there knew of the fact of Ruth's having been waylaid, so rare were any wayfarers in that lone promontory; and it was with shame and much trouble that the rash cause of this outrage explained the whole to Mr. Llewellyn.

But Marmaduke had yet stranger disclosures to make to the clergyman, which, however, with a sort of sunkenness of spirit and heart, as well as voice, he confined to briefly assuring him that Ruth *was his own undoubted daughter*, that the contrary opinion was a mistake, and, moreover, he left it to his paternal kindness to impress that certain fact on the mind of his

long mistaken child. He himself, he said, was utterly unequal to the task of explaining this to her. But there was another more arduous part to be performed. That was, to reconcile her to a speedy marriage with her cousin—once more her *real* cousin.

"I know it—I am well convinced that he loves her—that makes me most anxious to see her under his roof—what protector has she else?" said Paull.

"My dear neighbour, has she not *you*, her father?"

He but shrugged his shoulders and smiled dismally, and was silent.

Paull was now more earnest than ever had been William himself, for the completion of the promised rite.

An hour or two's sleep was necessary to the exhausted spirits of Ruth. Paull, on her retiring to a chamber in the lowly parsonage for that purpose, called her back, kissed her, gave her his blessing in a solemn, new, mysterious manner, yet so mixed with soothings as to avoid terrifying or disturbing her mind, not yet become calm—and withheld the mighty secret which was burthening his own breast.

"Won't you go and rest too?" she said anxiously—"*Pray* do—are you not hurt? you

look dreadful pale!—*Do* go! I shall go to sleep so comfortably, if I know you are gone too—I'm sure you need it—*Will* you?"

"I go, my girl," he said; but somewhat of hollow horror was in the tone. Three times he called her back after their parting on the antique staircase, dusky with leaves outside. "The last time," he said—"And as if this were our very last meeting on this side of eternity, believe me, my *child*, what can I call you tenderer, dearer? oh! believe, that no husband will love, no father ever loved, as tenderly, as intensely as I have loved and love you, my *all!* Blood to a heart's life is not more necessary than you are to my life!—soul never shrunk from quitting mortal body as does this trembling hand at quitting *this* dear hand's hold! Imagine, only imagine this the last time, mine must hold your's—your's mine! Go, sleep, my precious! and don't let any solemn strangeness in this farewell keep you waking. The good and kind man of this house, will explain something to you, my life! hereafter, and promise me that what through him I enjoin you to do, I mean conjure, implore as if my last prayer ——"

"*Command*, say, dearest Marmaduke," she

said sobbing, but only sad from the sadness of his manner.

"Well, then, sweet! say, dying *command*—you will obey it?"

"Or die!" she said vehemently. "Alas! how mournfully you speak, yet try to hide it! But when I wake, you'll talk and think cheerfully again, won't you? since there's nothing the matter—so let us thank God for our escape."

"Amen!" Marmaduke responded.

"Oh, there's no further danger, now; don't be low spirited about those wicked men," she rejoined, his secret allusion to some more awful danger, and moral escape, misunderstood, and thus they parted. Paull stopped at the stair foot to see once more the glimpsing of her form, as passing a window that illumined that part of the staircase else quite dark; then sought Mr. Llewellyn.

It seemed that Paull dreaded the tumultuous tenderness of such a terrible parting as could alone be between him and her, if to be an eternal one.

A long and affecting dialogue occurred between the pastor and Paull, during the sleep of Ruth, to part of which William became an auditor, and shed many tears of shame and

contrition under the gentle though searching strictures of the clergyman on his conduct. Paull spoke of a journey he proposed to take, and committed to his nephew as husband, and to that benignant man as second father, in his absence, the bodily and mental protection of the sole being that attached him to life. But his reiterated question "Is she awake yet?" put to the daughter Kate, seemed to prove the infirmity of his lately formed purpose of setting off during that sleep on his melancholy journey. Yet ere she awoke he departed.

CHAPTER XII.

I watch the sea, I walk the land,
In all the world, I am alone!—
Silent I pace the sea-worn strand,
I listen heartless to the tone
Of winds and waters——All in vain!
Creation dies without a groan—
And I without a hope remain!

CRABBE—"*World of Dreams.*"

IT was already twilight when a shepherd of the promontory came running in, without stopping to knock, and sought the vicar through private rooms, in his eagerness to tell that he had seen Paull the blind man stealing under the high rocks of Llandudno, there rising like a wall to the height of the highest cathedral, the seaward buttresses of the dreadful Orme's Head, although it was a spring tide, the sea running in, and the passage obliterated at high tide, and always without an exit, except into those deep watery caves, worn by the action of the sea.

He had shouted to him, he said, but he

seemed wishful to hide himself, and did hide instantly in one of the caverns. At the pace he walked, it would be hard for him to return, should he proceed much further; and he would not return at his call, but, emerging after a space, crept along as before, over the great stones, avoiding the fine sandy footing lower down, as more exposed to view. Such are the powerful under-currents and eddies off that dangerous coast, that the body of one drowned would, probably, be borne out to sea far and long, to receive a remote sepulture from stranger-hands, if any besides that gulph of sea itself. It was true, that Marmaduke did often chuse to pursue that blind, dreadful avenue between mural precipices and a stormy ocean, but he had always prudently timed his visit.

No time was to be lost—strange doubts of his design whitened the cheek of the religious man, who had become deeply interested in the fates of the father and daughter—but he imposed silence on his household, to avoid terrifying the poor wearied and still sleeping girl: but except Kitty, who stayed in doors, all were quickly at the near end or aperture of the avenue. No storm threatened, but a great swell of the sea, and its advance with all the force of a spring-tide, aided by some wind blow-

ing on shore, had in itself all the terrors if not the uproar of a storm, and the deadliness of a hundred storms, on such a shore. Woe to whatever, existing by breath, should be caught in that lessening prison, walled beyond the cunning of any architect or tyrant that ever contrived a dungeon or a tower! The vicar would not be restrained from advancing a long way into that impassable gorge of cliff and ocean, now flinging its long breadth of froth, nearer and nearer, high in air, like a mighty beast, secure in his mightiness,—advancing in measured pace, tossing his wrath's foam. The rest, William, the shepherd, and one other person, followed him to the furthest extent possible with safety; all then joined in one long shout to the unseen adventurous man, but the sea was too loud, with its fresh breeze and its furiously running tide, to allow hope of their being heard. Nothing answered but rock birds, corvorants, and puffins, that came flying out overhead with their shrill clangour of many notes; yet did that long, hopeless shout of the human—and that following wild discord of the sea-birds' voices, seem less dismal than the succeeding and last—the superhuman, solitary, immense voice of the deep, when considered as the trump of its

invading march—the dead march of the towering waves closing in on a single human being, certainly somewhere in the jaws of that destruction! The silence, and that solemn sound dreadful as the silence, and the lengthened desolate perspective, dwindling to what seemed a mere ledge already, of the rock-strewn beach, lost in the tossing and leaping white of surf, this dire perspective, that low thunder of sound, that death-silence of the pause, all struck funereal horror on every sense of every one of the party now stopping baffled, thus unanswered except by wild creatures and wild waves—compelled to turn, and hurry for their own lives, yet certain that a devoted life must there be left behind.

"Shepherd," Mr. Llewellyn cried out, "have'nt *you* gathered samphire formerly on Priestholme Island? Could not you, as you're expert in such things, get more help, and try your old art, to suspend yourself so as to reach the *bottom* of the cliffs far on, and so pull up this unhappy man?"

"Ah, sir," said the samphire-gatherer, "our ropes but reach to the nests or the samphire, you know, not down to the beach, not down such piles of rock as these!—and, well-a-day! how should we get up a strong man the like of

blind Paull, when he 's set his heart on dying? Who shall get *him* up against his will?"

"We must not judge him, shepherd; we don't *know* that he has such dread design! He may mistake the time of tide,—he may"—

"Nay, nay master, sure as ye 're a *living* man here, *Paull* is gone yonder *to die*, I'm sure from his ways when he caught my voice—and if the sea has'nt carried him leagues out by morning, you mind, that beach will show! One of those huge holes where the sea creatures hide under the rock, you'll see, shall be all the death-bed and chamber Marmaduke Paull will ever find."

Though time would have permitted a little further advance, as they found on returning, all hopes were now directed to the heights above, small as was the chance of such a descent proving practicable. Much time had been already lost, in this confusion, when a fresh alarm of a new nature quite astounded them. They had quitted the beach some time, and some were running here and there for ropes, and having thus alarmed others, were joined by them, while some had proceeded far on to such known parts of the terrific Orme's Head top, or its rocky ridges stretching up the coast, as might admit a hope of one scrambling down—

when a woman came barefoot rapidly on the green down, bringing some clothes in her hand.

"Who's here that knows Ruth Paull's gown? Who knows if these are *her* clothes? Look here! they've been found in the little cove that's scooped like a grotto under Llandudno rocks, where our girls dress and undress, without being seen; the fellow that has been lurking in the caves, till the sea should get their boat off, says he found them there."

William was the first to recognize the torn gown of the unfortunate girl. "She has drowned herself! she's drowned! she's gone!" he cried out, and dropped down speechless in a convulsive fit.

"My poor patient good girl! Lord! what are these hurrying judgments?" Mr. Llewellyn said, groaning and lifted up hands and heart, and eyes, to the Heaven his constant refuge; but, recollecting that worldly aid was not quite hopeless yet, he sprung up from his one knee on which he had dropped, and gave various directions and advice, calculated to give effect to what chance remained.

The presumption was fearfully strong that the loving daughter, newly waked, hearing of the supposed catastrophe of Paull, overshadowed by the guilt of suicide, had rushed to the sea, and there desperately followed his example.

Yet that her despair should be deliberate enough to resort to a secret creek, where to undress with modesty, or should pause to strip at all, as if but about to bathe in the summer sea, seemed inconsistent. Ere long, the arrival of the distracted girl Kitty apprised them that Ruth had overheard the whole alarm of her father's danger, or determination to surrender his living body to the sea, and while her companion had no suspicion of her intent, (as she acted very deliberately, only moaning lowly to herself,) proceeded softly and barefoot out of the house, over the greensward marsh, so round the back of the foot of the Orme's Head, down to the beach.

Yet several ran thither after her clothes were found, and though her body would surely have been washed back on the sands, with such a tide setting strong in, nothing had been discovered.

Three only had embarked in the daring attempt at abduction. Of these the wounded one remained in custody at a farm-house; the others had lurked in some ancient deep cells which form part of a ruin, supposed a British fort, near the Orme's Head; and these two were now, by the confusion, led to venture forth, (the one with the clothes, as the woman told,) and were allowed by Mr. Llewellyn to try to

haul down their secreted boat, where the high tide had lodged it, that they might with others, row up the shore, but the high surf of a spring tide and gale, rendered the attempt to launch it abortive.

William had recovered enough to rejoin those who had reached the top ridges of headland overlooking the beach; that dreadful prison in which Marmaduke had immured himself to meet death, with a steady eye and stern welcome, in its frightful slowness of advance, bringing his watery shroud to the living man, in the near and nearer surf-foam, and his only dirge in the measured thunder-peal of every falling wave.

The lone extent of his death vault was however so great, that it was merely at random they could fix on any spot of the long range of precipice, over the brink of which the bolder might halloo down, or the bolder still, such as the samphire-gatherer (turned shepherd) might make an experimental descent from, perhaps so far down as to reach the determined suicide with the voice. Yet this could do little, as it would be too late for him to regain the entrance of his dire watery cloister, and impossible to scale perpendicular crags.

Thus, in this quiet little green nook of country (under a moon now come forth refulgent, so calm, so safe-looking!) some were hunting for the corpse of its most lovely native-born, with many tears; others were trying to drive a heavy boat down the rough beach stones, with noisy but zealous dint of strength; and others perilously peering over craggy edges of cliff, that lifted them to a level, in their eye, with the tremendous Penmanmaur, seen dusky in moonlight shade, just across the Bay; and two already fixing ropes (used in taking the puffin's eggs) in two or three parts, to suspend themselves, even over that brink, and down those terrible and sharp-jutting walls, worse than smooth perpendicular—all was distress, dismay, and a tragedy in act or expectation, where all had been peace and a fine sunset and happy cottages, so lately.

A cloudless moon, and brilliant evening sky, burnished, as it seemed, by the fresh sweeping of the breeze across its deep blue and all its stars, now gave to the eye of the man daringly descending by the rope, the whole bird's-eye view of the now very narrow beach below. He saw it already washed over by every dash of the broad sea-sweep, the light snowy foam-

shower, (a treacherous beauty, glittering in the moonshine, lovely yet so deadly,) quite shutting the black conspicuous stones below from his eye, as if overarching whatever was below of life, though this as yet was but an illusion of the sight, for some little of even the lower sandy smooth part of the strand was yet visible on each retirement of the sea.

A general cry rose now among those behind, on the top—the man suspended having shouted up to the man minding the rope, and he to Mr. Llewellyn, who was on his knees scrambling to look over, and to the rest—that he could see Marmaduke distinctly.

"Cry to him!" was the general voice. "Can you let down another rope? What's he doing?"

"Not another rope, nor ten an end would reach him! He waves his hand to us slowly, and he walks quite calm, just stepping back and back a little from the surf: the horridest part of the cliff too, he's under! It's a sheer wall, I know it well, forty fathoms high over his head; that's all he has to step back to! Only a cavern there is, and that's shallow; not ten minutes' life will that give him!——I've cried to him, again, but I hear no voice answer."

"I've caught birds many a fathom deep, my-

self," William exclaimed. "Let me try that other rope, and get down to you!" he hallooed down.

"It's quite useless!"

Another still more agitated outcry and stir now ran among the group, mixed with a most lamentable cry and groan from the young man.

"I see somebody or something upright, come all along the beach, *narrow* beach 'tis now!" the man said to those above, and the man on the brink saw it too, "so narrow that the surf-froth breaks over her, and drives her up on the very foundation of the rough rock, off the sand, quite!"

"*Her?* how!—is it a woman?"

"God in Heaven knows what it is! a woman from the grave, I believe—the moon shines full upon her—ha! *now* he cries to us—he cried out dreadfully then—a melancholy long cry it was. 'Twas *not* to *us* he cried—it was to her to that person; now he's like a madman! now he's throwing his arms all about, and to the sky and to the sea! Hark! he cried out again! now he has rushed to meet her, she's come up to him. They're embracing! Mercy upon us, and keep us, sure it's a ghost! If ever I saw graveclothes in my life, that's a *shroud* it wears! Look! look you, man! look

down all of ye, is'nt it walking in a shroud? Yes, it *is* a shroud—but it is a living woman!"

"But who? Is it not Ruth?"

"Who can see that?"

"Do you see them now?"

"No, he's gone, after throwing his arms round her, gone up the shore *like mad*, carrying her, I think—yes, he *flies* with her!"

"He might as well try to lift her up to us, or the moon, with his arms, as carry her to where she came in—that's sure to be some fathom deep by this time, you know, for all this here part is very hollow, quite a cove, here; he'll meet deep sea directly."

"Ah! you're right, Shepherd, here he comes back with her. Hark! Did ye hear? 'Death?' 'Death!' God! God! 'My child!' I heard him then! Another sea!—It's *just* over 'em!"

William had again fainted, and remained in stupor on the heathy ground, dumb and helpless. The two men continued their colloquy, the group above sharing in the horror, and holding their breaths to listen. The depth precluded all possibility of help, and the closeness of whole sea would have now not allowed time for a single manœuvre, had any been practicable.

"I heard a dreadful groan just now; hark!—

Now he's quieter, and she has sure persuaded him to kneel—they are both kneeling fronting the high wave and as far back as they can get, up to the rocks——*There* was a sea! God have mercy! They're gone——No!—but it must have struck them—I could'nt see them for the monstrous leap of the surf! I thought it would have reached up to me almost——I see 'em again, now——It's for her he groaned and for her he ran so wildly, for he was calm as a ghost, and stood like an effigy before—Ha! *that* was a very thunder!—Halloo! Shepherd! do you see 'em *now?* d'ye see 'em still?"

"Stop a moment—there's such a fog of the foam——There's nothing but sea! nothing but deep sea! The Lord have mercy upon their souls!"

"Amen!" Mr. Llewellyn responded, and throwing himself along, hid his face in the withered broom of the height. But the next minute he rose—and begging silence—drew forth his pocket prayer-book, and said—"None knows *certainly* what was the intent of these poor souls in coming hither. I at least will not judge them—but as others may, I take this time—'Man that is born of a woman, &c.' and faltering, he went through the form of Christian Burial of the Dead.

The body of Marmaduke Paull and that of his ill-fated child, still in that ghastly dress which she had resolutely assumed to meet death with decency, deliberately following him she had so often led, were found in close embrace in a hollow of a little reef of rock, dry at low water, in whose wave-worn cleft no broader than a chest, they lay as in a single coffin formed for two bodies. So ended THE TRAGICAL PASSION OF MARMADUKE PAULL.

THIS dwarf-romance (as the rural Doctor calls his bantlings) being at last read to an end, I could not help remarking that I was disappointed by it, as having expected more introduction of Welsh habits of life and manners—more, in short, of imitation of Scott's treatment of Scottish subjects and paintings of national manners.

"You mean," said he, "that I have given you a romance, and you wanted a novel—one of Welsh life?"

"Exactly so."

"Why, to tell the truth," rejoined he, "such it was my design to write, and I have fulfilled the design—I have, at home, plenty of such, I don't mean imitations of that great master,

but my native endeavours to interweave Cambrian manners and domestic plots,—but I have my own ideas on this subject, which I had best state at once.

"I confess *I* see no merit, and find no pleasure, in those homely dry details, in the novel shape, of common-place life; pictures of mere local and conventional forms of existence, whether taken from St. James's or St. Giles's, or the London cit's fire-side, from town or country. What if they *be* faithful to the original? The original is little worth. I maintain that it is absurd to eulogise the *mere* representation of such things, however truthful. What is the value of genius, if all it brings to a task be superfluous, and mere truth is every thing? A correct police reporter, if such eulogy be just, may rival a novelist. I conceive the whole excellence of such literary paintings to consist in the power of the artist to *exalt* and spiritualize these dull materials by the magical illusions of *poetry*, to throw round them the romantic attraction of lofty sentiment and picturesque associations. For this reason, in my first reading to you, I think it right to put forth, *first* an experimental sample of my attempt in this higher walk, hoping that if I

can succeed in that, if I can reach the graces of poetry, the grandeur of passion, I need not despair of my ability for the meaner portion of a novelist's task. If unequal to the effort of infusing a soul into the inert mass, the mere faithful effigies of Welsh life, I would be warned in time, and let it quite alone. Therefore *if I ever publish*, I will put forth, first, *Romance*, and postpone the national *Novel*.

"To explain myself," he pursued, "I would ask any one to compare tragedy under the hands of Lillo, and tragedy from the soul of Shakespeare. The dreadful fidelity of Lillo to his original, a dismal murder, in his '*Arden of Feversham*,' cannot be denied. Yet I deny that that play is tragedy, for it is *not* a poem. If truth *alone* deserved the highest applause, he should rank above Shakespeare. But who is there that does not confess the more intense interest of the murder in Macbeth and in Othello? See the effect of exalting a harrowing situation, by the diviner spirit of poetry! The *more* truly tragic that situation, the less can it spare eloquent passion and picturesque adjuncts. Without them it becomes *only* harrowing.

"Were it not *somewhat* late in life's day, I would learn German, devote my whole mind

to acquiring its graces and powers, and write tragedy for the German Stage. *There* is yet a crevice open for dramatic talent.

"Shall I tell you of a little publishing adventure of a former friend of mine many years ago? Being Muse-bitten, moreover, passionately longing to have a *female* child (no such wicked or preposterous a desire, one might have thought), and disappointed by the death of one,—what does he but clap in, with some wild obscure poetry he happened to print, I could hardly say *publish*, a good while after—a little lament over this blighted hope. There was certainly nothing absurd in its few stanzas, whatever there might be in the act of publishing them. *The* Blackwood was gracious enough, with much condemnation, to say of the *whole*, that it exhibited 'great power of thought and feeling.' A London weekly critical affair, controverting the northern potentate's wisdom in its favour, though he 'kingly did but nod'—selected (as if there was no other nonsense in the volume!) a few stanzas embodying a *Father's Grief*, and grew most droll and facetious over a bleeding heart and a dead infant! with equal elegance and Christian feeling, finished off one of the stanzas half quoted, with a rhyme of

the feeling critic's own—'*Fiddle de dum de dee!!!*' Now, wholly waiving the question as to the *justice* of the critical judgment, what must be the moral or critical public taste of the times, wherein an emotion (however excessive) so innocent, so grave, so disarming to even just severity, as a father's mourning, could be seized on as a vehicle for venomous waggery? There was nothing beyond mere taste involved,—no moral, no principle compromised in my friend's book, and I remember the very highest Northern critic said, in MS. it was '*undoubtedly the work of a man of genius, of much beauty of fancy, and great tenderness of heart;*' and contained '*thoughts and images which seemed to him very charming,*' &c. &c.

"I mention this only to shew that the gentle Literary Garreteer had no moral stimulus to stir his bile. Yet this was one of the oracles of public taste!"

Reverting to himself and his mode of life, he amused me with his philosophy, such as it is, consisting in an absolute death to worldly pride, contempt of all conventional forms but those of decency, aversion to walls and roofs, and delight in a *tent* (by no means a gay or pic-nic sort of one). He maintains that a shelter sufficient for the weather is the wise

man's best home, and his tent being sufficient is the best: "My books are for winter," said he. "Then for travelling, there is the waggon for great distances, where scenery fails in the intervals of stages. In our summer 'progresses,' my boys ride *one* horse and I another, commonly, but there 's always an anxiety about their grazing places.

"I never compose so readily, as when walking by the side of a good large waggon, in which I have shipped off my bodily part for London or Holyhead, or elsewhere—by a fine midnight moon. My old broken lyre seems to recover a string long gone, on such occasions. *There* moves my *home*, as true to me as the snail's, without the weight, into which I have only to turn, when tired or under stress of weather, and with my *own* straw (for I afford myself that luxury by buying wherever we stop), and the great tarpaulin curtain to peep through, at a moonlight rainbow perhaps, or halo, or the whole crowd of stars in an unbroken vault of intense blue, I am content. What need a hermit regard the 'pride of place' in the matter? If a country passenger or two be there, if decent, I am better pleased to be his or her companion, than to have for my *chum*, in a stage coach, any worthy portly 'jontleman of

Wales' troubled with a hiccup." I thus throw together a few of the remarks of the recluse, without troubling thee with mine that elicited them.

"Solitude," said he, "has overtaken me like an untimely nightfall. The few who began with me this rough journey of life, have all dropped by the way, and left me to tread its dreariest stage (the last) alone. At little more than half the age assigned to man by Scripture, I had anticipated the most terrible evil of extreme old age—the being left lonely in the world—a relic of times past, lingering in the altered present. Every where my sons and I are strangers. My *world* is wherever we pitch that tent (pointing to it); my summer home, and all my living world, those boys picking flowers round it. Could even this continue! But 'eheu fugaces—labuntur anni!' *My* way is not their way. *They* mounting Life's hill, I descending it as fast—our paths divide at a very little distance. *Merry* Christmas has no merriment for us, but the contrary. Hollow winds, and the rustling of withered leaves all about our ruined haunts, form but a mournful carol. Correspondents I have forgotten, and doubtless they have long forgotten me. The coming in of the post—(that little *event* of a country town

whence even the melancholy Cowper seems to have derived some pleasure,) which has so many sorts of flutters for other hearts, has not one for our's. I live but in the sun—my very being is all over *Persian*, and does involuntary homage to that parent-luminary. But what a half year's dying—what a very *palsy* of his being—awaits a man who lives upon sunbeams and leaves, in such a climate as this!

"It is for others to enjoy winter, to hug themselves in a home of brick, and warm their hearts, like their hands, by artificial fires—for men of equable nerves and tempers, which attach hearts to their own hearts thereby, keep sweet peace for ever in their homes, preserve whatever love they may have won in their life's spring, as a defence in its coming autumn, ensure loving smiles for their fireside, pity for their sick-bed, mourning long and tender for their graves! But there are those ill-starred paradoxical natures which beyond all others need such tendernesses, and least of all others can conciliate what they so need—natures, at once stern and gentle, soft as woman, yet seeming rugged of heart and feelings; needing home, yet restless there; loving the wildness of homeless life, yet dying of melancholy in that wildness—ever troubled spirits, at war with the very

soothings essential to their peace—loathing even that peace, yet sick to the soul in whatever harshly breaks it! There is but one real *home* for such beings, and but one bosom—Earth's. If they can call any other *their* home, or *their* bosom, it is that which the fowls of heaven share with them—that Heaven's roof of summer-blue; it is the wild breast of the mountain, that they can hide on, to gaze at that quiet blue from betwixt its trees and savage rock-clefts!

"Yes," he pursued, "the advent of winter that expels me from my wildwood haunts, is the herald of a Siberian banishment, a confinement to worse than a *desert*—to a rustic *town*. Oh, the comfort of a return to my leafy home, with Spring! We hurry thither. Are our company —Flora's own—come? Perhaps only one pale lady is there (*looking* shortness of life, alas!)—a welcome little one, the colour of a sunset, a 'rose' though called a 'prim' one, more precious than the other blushing pride of June —and she waves us a pretty bow, peeping by our seat of last year. But if a *cowslip* be come, it stirs the triple heart of us! The boys make a rush at her beauty, and if a *knot* of cowslips appear, it produces quite a 'sensation.' It is a whole family of distinction at the door (our sod door) all come at once to welcome us. As

we exchange looks with them, their mere looks bring a very milky way of flowers, a constellation of the July ground, along with them for expecting imagination! Already we sit with our curtains drawn by Nature's hand—the young-leafed hedgerow, tinged with a sunlight as tender as its own paly green verdure, not a week old. Oh the luxury of that *first* summer tea-drinking! (Oh, the misery of the *last*, I will not say yet.) Then we examine (with many a mournful outcry) the various mischiefs which the invading winter-overflows, rains, and melting snows, have been working in our green caravansera, leaving river-rack and mud here, or breaking down a pretty mossy root there, till we hardly know our own *house* again. Then great is our curiosity and search, to find the same smoked stones with which we built our fireplace the summer previous. Having found them, and disputed long about the best bit of sod for our breakfast table, at last, all is perfect! A charming restoration! From those blackened stones to the (all important) tea-kettle suspended over them—from that and its dear old tune that never tires me, up to that of the feathered young folks over head, and to their chambers of green and golden leafy lattice-work that keep a constant play of sunlight and

shadow on the greensward under it—from highest to lowest, nothing is missing of what charmed us last season! Then does that fine resurrection of a summer, with all its leaves, sun and song, suggest the thought of *Life's* summer —Youth's sweet season!—Oh the thousand sweetnesses, the multiform pleasant fears, hopes, emotions, sympathies—tender, social, generous—aye, noble!—that flutter about young *green* hearts, keeping such a constant dance in the bosom as do those myriad young leaves keep playing on that chequered sod.

"I recall the warmth they were ever attended with—the mind's eye never tired, the heart's glow never chilled, the expectation never flagging—every day promising a beautiful To-morrow! Our fire is rekindled, our couch re-carpetted and re-embroidered more beautifully than ever. The fallen leaves are all replaced by tenderer brighter leaves;—but that May-day of the mind—but that fine fire in the heart—but the whispering of the voice of Hope, the promise of the coming time—what is become of *those?* when shall that fire burn again? What has been the conclusion of that most ravishing prelude of heart-harmony? All, all ended in a solitary sitting down by a wild wood! Where is the ecstatic-dreaming *young* man whose Eden

was every primrose-bank? Is it *I*, yellow as autumn, bitter as winter, hopeless as death, here, lagging towards a nameless grave, that must answer 'Here!'"

EVENING.

Bank of the Dhyrrwyd River, near Maentwrog.

The Major and the Parson having set forth on a chase for subscribers to the "Sacred Poems" of the latter—the Doctor amused our next fit of idleness (which, following the languor of a sultry day, disposed us to sit down on the bank of a little brook that chanced to run under a hanging ash tree growing horizontally out of a ledge of earthy rock,) with citations from his Anthology of Unknown Poets, as he calls a MS. collection of his.

"I have had the curiosity," said he, "to select from whatever writers seem to bear the true banner of the muse, however lowly their worldly poetic rank, such specimens as serve to illustrate the poetical character; as seem to

emanate from that peculiar combination of feelings, frame of nerves, and worldly accidents perhaps, which go to make up that most unenviable distinction from the ordinary human character. From the simplest taint of this malady (that has the odd infirmity of groaning in song instead of in the usual way,) to the inveterate and hopeless height of it, when events have exasperated the slight spot into an open plague-boil, and the gentler constitutional melancholy of birth has festered into the shut-up despair of adult or declining age—from the pensive play of Fancy, to the melancholic horror of the dream of the Mad at Heart—I have culled every specimen I could find. Together they might perhaps prove a truthful commentary to D'Israeli's most touching and life-like picture of such character, in which I have found matter of perpetual wonder and regret that the name of D'Israeli is not enrolled among the 'Poets of Great Britain' in a very high rank—for, as the character he paints is essentially poetical, it seems impossible that any but a true poet could have so entered into its hidden mysteries, and spread its least-known recesses like a map before us. Yet so far as I know, however eminent as a 'literary' character, the author has

not exhibited that capacity which he must possess, of wooing and winning the Muse.

"The next thing I will read to you (for none but myself can read my penmanship) seems to exhibit that weariness of rest, that life-long restlessness, that vagabond *passion* for change of scene which drives some of these eccentric miserables over the world, without a tie to any spot of it, who begin with luxuriating in loneliness on a sunny sod, or on the cowslip bank of the green channel of a brook, that hides them from those walking in the field above, begin thus in *youth*—but end with cursing on the straw of the madhouse cell, or hiding from the whole world in broken-hearted solitude, and a self-reproved yet resistless utter hatred of that world and all it holds.

"In a sunny day," continued he, "I divert myself with the gentler pensive kind of these Songs of the Unknown, as with the first yellow tints of some wood, where autumn (though winter's harbinger) looks beautiful. In a drear day, I find the sterner sort more in unison with my mood, as I would walk by that same wood in confirmed winter, when its former remains of beauty, now fallen, lie all under foot, adding to the howling horror of the wind, as they drift

before it, like the sea-wrack riding the surgy sweeps of the most lonely sea, when the stripped boughs are fighting one another, clashing like a whole army of stark naked men, who, throwing off armour and all defence, retain but their bare swords, with which to rage, be struck and strike, kill and die.

ODE TO MY HOUR OF DEATH.

BY A WANDERER IN WALES.

WHERE dost thou waylay me, oh Hour,
Watching like some wild beast in jungle dark,
Me to devour?
Hour of the last leap of Life's fluttering spark!
Assume the very form,
In which thou 'lt ride the storm
Of death! appear! appear! thou shapeles Terrible!
Paint on yon sunshiny bank's green
The *Mirage* of my parting scene,
When on the die of Life's last sand, hangs Judgment,
Heaven, and Hell!

By what inn-hut—what wild wayside,
What buzzing pauper room—what loathsome bed,
On which have many died,
Grim dost thou hide?
Who lifts a fall'n wayfaring stranger's head?
Who closes the blue lips,
And eyes in long eclipse,

Or waits to close,—for decency not pity?
I yearn, I long to look upon
Her who shall whisper "He is gone!"
Oh, be it some grey crone, far from the hated city!

My heart, since I have thought and felt,
Only in rustic haunts, to rustics only,
Where peace and pastoral dwelt,
Would ope or melt—
Social in loneliness, in cities lonely:
An old dame's spinning wheel
Taught it to sweetly feel,
Dancing to its mean music by some autumn-tinted wood;
Who could have thought that pensive taste
Foretold life's mournful total waste,
A life, and death, and grave of stranger solitude?

But some, for strangers on the earth,
And aliens in their native land to roam,
Are marked from birth;
Men of *no* country unless heaven's blue dome,
A melancholy *home!*—
Of some chance spot of sky,
Or star which first our eye,
New-born, was roll'd on, shall we make our native spot?
As wisely as "*my* Country" call,
Some empty spot of this great ball,
Where chanced our ill-starred birth, where other ties are not.

Hence of no *home* death-bed serene
I dream; enough for me, self stung, self driven,
(Lifting Time's dreadful screen)
That it be green,
These mountains' heads bent o'er me and yon heaven.

Are my dear children there ?
Far be they, oh ! afar,
Till Pain and you have done your worst, dark Hour !
But when our Mother too has done,
And veiled my face—let them look on
That 'face-cloth'* green, and leave a tear-drop and a flower.

Oh, dark Hour ! on me, wandering,
Leap by some river's high and lonely source,
Whose little moss-lapped spring
May softly sing ;
The pure cold blessing of whose new-born course
My dying thirst may reach,
Bowered by old oak or beach,
Hollowly murmuring the long divorce
'Twixt the tired body and tired soul,
'Twixt its clay hut and yon bright whole ;
And flags and long grass wind my long-unburied corse !

'Tis something, in our friendless doom,
To 'scape the false, th' unfriendly, and the strange ;
Nor is such green-sick-room,
Of wild-wood gloom,
One unbefitting the most mighty change,
Of th' heart to very clod,
Of mind to demigod !
Earth's sighing stranger to Heaven's welcomed guest !
(There man, unhelped by man, must grope
His dim way !) or, if faints Faith's hope,—
Change from short troubling to eternal rest.

* The name used for a piece of cloth purposely shaped to cover the face of a corpse. Brand's Popular Antiquities.

NIGHT.

Harlech Castle and Village.

Antique, romantic Harlech! Whoever can find a place in his mind or heart not preoccupied by worldlier feelings, for a short feast of philosophic melancholy, let him repair to this poor yet picturesque group of wild homes, by the moon, as we did.

Here is a grand skeleton of a famous fortress, with its round towers lifted to the sky by a noble promontory, *not* jutting over the sea waves, as all books of direction for Welsh travelling strangely represent it to do, but distant a good mile of sand-hills. Here was once a famous congress of great men, held by the first Edward, and vestiges of a place of consequence remain, vestiges only. Now it seems, to a gay and peopled town, what a mummy is to a living body. The stir of its vitality, the voice of eager interests, and the pride of architectural form totally gone, there yet lingers a something in its very desolateness which distinguishes it from a village wretched *ab origine*—wretched now though it be, in the eyes of all but such travellers as ourselves.

Its precipice of a street, green, and uncouth with slabs of the mountain's own rock starting through the soil; its houses, with oldest thatch, bristling down lower than a man's head; the doors, half a man's height high, dark within, weather-stained without, and lichened all over as damp rocks in the thick of woods—maugre all this, *we* found a certain charm in this place, especially as viewed by moonlight. Nor is business, nor are politics, wholly at a stand or undiscussed in solitary Harlech. There is knitting of stockings; there is drying of nets; there is busy gossiping between the old, sitting at their doors on seats of the natural rock. The political agitation is indeed not Radical, nor anywise akin to that of Reform in its "fine phrensy," but purely *Harlechian,* indigenous to the place. The politics are piscatory, having reference to the chief source of prosperity to that little knot of hermits, consisting of fishers and their "useless old," and a few tradespeople whom they help to support. In the blue sea, which lies nobly expansive, all open to their high and airy locality, is generally to be espied some little fishing-boat purveying for the wants of the natives, rarely out of sight of shore; a white speck, midway between Harlech and that opposite curve of shore which presents another

sea-rock with its castle-ruins (Criccieth) almost facing this nobler one. On this lonely adventurer in the "deep waters," and the chances of its success, and the probable hour of its "arrival," and the price of the fish it may bring according to the glut or scarcity, every eye is fixed, and every tongue employed. The mound of the noble ruin is the Stock Exchange, or *Bourse* of these aged citizens, where they congregate to discuss all these points. The expectation of mails from the continent during the war was not greater in the city of London, than that which actuates the good people of the "*city*" of Harlech, (for so most little *ancient* villages are denominated in Wales, by their dwellers,) when, as the little sail nears the sandy cove of its anchorage, old and young hobble, or skip, or toddle down open-mouthed, to meet the important "old man of the sea," with his tidings of his cargo.

The Rural Doctor seemed quite at home in this wild place, as evinced by many cordial shakes of many shaking and withered hands of old people that the warmth of the night had kept abroad. A very grey grandmother, remembering his boys from previous summer visits, went hobbling in-doors for gingerbread and apples to treat them with.

Higher sympathies and loftier reminiscences seemed to invite us to enter as we reached the ruinous castle. As sentimental travellers, this record of our days, thou wilt remember, deals only with the emotions, reflections, moods, and fancies, excited by the objects we find in our way, and leaves the history and purely topographical description of such object to the professed tour-writers, whose numbers are sufficient to afford the reader great choice of such descriptions. Something of the same distinction as exists between a map and a picture of the same place, is intended here to be produced, compared with those more precise representations, if the word "picture" may be permitted to such desultory touches. Of all that relates to the bygone days of Harlech, therefore, and the vicissitudes of its castle, we stop not to discourse; yet there are incidents among these, as in the histories of most Welsh fortresses, which come fairly within the sphere of the sentimental traveller. Such is the fact of the most heroic and memorable of (at least *British*) queens having found an asylum in this remote fortress. Margaret of Anjou, after losing all her jewels, baggage, &c. and narrowly escaping with her life after the defeat of the Royalist army in 1460, fled hither from Coventry. Having been

waylaid and attacked by the way, hither she came, hunted, dispirited, and desolate, to rest awhile, before she faced again the bitter storm of her fallen destiny in defence of her husband and king. As we crossed the now dry moat by a little earthen mound instead of the draw-bridge, and stood within the ample area of the walls, lighted by the moonshine streaming through the loopholes in the stone, formed for discharge of arrows, and through yawning clefts, wild-grated by branches of intercrossing trees, which have grown old *within* what afforded her a shelter at least, if not a home (now a cold shelter even for the bat or owl), we could not help recalling the terrible England of that bloody period, and comparing it with our yet bloodless England, not without some touch of mixed horror and pity for the madness of some moderns *(patriots,* too, forsooth!) who play with the idea of Civil War, as might an idiot with a couching tiger, which, poor wretch, pleased with its "imposing *attitude*" and grin, grins back that fearful "demonstration" of deadliness, with his own poor credulous smile! Restricting our sympathies to that throneless Queen, however, we fancied the feelings with which she crossed that moat, *now* a pretty green and daisied fairy-dale for the village young

to play in. What *Radical* patriot would not wish it once more to heave brimming full with bloodied water, even though a few of those village-fry might lie there floating in the cause of "sweet liberty?" I say, we imagined her feelings when the chains of the drawn-up bridge clanked behind her; we saw her faded, grand, and melancholy form, sitting with head on hand, when retired for the night, and watching, through that small and narrow light-hole, which constant peril of life alone allowed to the *homes* of our forefathers, the yellow brilliance of the flashing sea, far stretching out in the moonlight of some such night as that *we* then *enjoyed.* Strange and bitter, indeed, must have been the contrast between her rightful palace-home in the heart of her husband's empire, where she received the homage of a yet undistracted people, and that wild, remote, and melancholy fortress, with its wind-beat site, its surrounding sands, and stormy sea, which had unbarred its gates in mercy to her misery, rather than in duty to her regal dignity!

"Bid her farewell, a martyr *and* a queen!"—Shakspeare.

In accordance with the political sentiment inspired by the recollection of the wars of the Roses, I suppose it was, that my companion murmured forth, in the moonlight ruin, the

following Ode, or whatever it is to be called, with which this Day must end :—

A FATHER'S WISH IN THE ENGLAND OF 183—.

When Summer day, too fiercely fair,
Brews thunder, then to thatch and eave
The wild-winged children of the air,
Though loth their fields of blue to leave,
Forewarned, repair.

From singing in grass green and deep,
The mother calls her infant in,
Though loth from its lov'd flowers to keep ;
And ere the rain and roar begin,
Sings him to sleep.

Soft through that blustering thundering dark,
Sleeps nestled bird, sleeps cradled boy ;
Till once more blessed blue and lark
Come beautiful, then, waked to joy,
Quits each its ark.

Since England's long bright day, at last
A hideous thunder-storm is brewing ;
While wise and good men look, *aghast*—
And fools, *impatient*—for wild ruin,
Till it be past.

My children ! in some glen untrod,
I would that under a green tree
I might your forms lay soft on sod,
Endymion-like, to sleep as he,—
I would to God !

Though *true* your mimic death, *to me*—
Though I, alas! too old to hope
The passing of this storm to see,
And bid your eyes on peace to ope,—
Would it might be!

So dim our day, so sure wrath's rod,
I would that e'en your own sweet land
Might be unseen, unknown, untrod,
Till high God stay his dreadful hand,
I would to God!

END OF THE FIRST DAY.

THE

MOUNTAIN-DECAMERON.

SECOND DAY.

ARGUMENT.

The Quaker here sends up to his city friend Hogg, some account of the more wild or solemn superstitions peculiar to the Principality, also one of his rural friend's very best Miniature Romances.

MORNING.

From the Promontory of Penlynn that divides the two Estuaries, Traeth Mawr and Traeth Bach.

"ONCE more upon the waters!" as a more ambitious Pilgrim breaks forth. On *our* waters, our best beloved, on so narrow a slip of pastoral land that we can both hear and see the blue (or rather many coloured) sea weltering gently and brilliantly glistening on each side of it, being almost at its extreme point. A true *shepherd's* peninsula is this! From every elevated point of this most rural and secluded neck of land (full of mossy knolls and little rich meadows, contrasted and jumbled together with

wild heathy spots, farmhouses as grotesque and ivied as some old monastic cell of a wilderness) we catch two totally distinct landscapes, as each river, the Glasslyn, which forms the great —and the Dyrrwhyd that widens into the lesser — Traeth, presents its own mountain shores. A little rock-sheltered sea port (Porth Madoc) is just near enough to *look* beautiful, but not to be *heard*; a few white sails overtopped by the wall of cliff, under which they lurk, the breezy blue aerial freedom of a whole *sea* sky, newly uncurtained,—its mists yet not quite scattered; a vast cone of a mountain overtopping those ocean cliffs in their turn, and that sun-glorified beautiful blue arch of heaven above all, while on this side, dim forms seem to be moving on air, across the mouth of the tide river, the embankment on which they move, being not seen from this point—then the illimitable background of up-sparkling ocean, and restless horizon—surely God never painted a nobler picture!

It is very early—we are not long risen from our tents, and looking down on those solemn sands and their wild vast channel. While I write (waiting the boiling of our kettle in true *Egyptian* fashion) I look down on the shelly expanse of the Traeth *Bach*. Brine pools left

by the tide now out, are shining blue to the sky in patches—white wings of the many sea-birds flicker brilliantly and glance back light to the low sun, yet mild on the sea's brink, as they hover and dip for the fish left there. There is something solemn and peculiar in the cries of these fowl to land folks. Here their plaintive wailings are all that break the soundless peace of the broad river bed (the strong sea retired) and their aerial white specks almost the only *motion*:—for the human figures, where the poor people are already fishing also, in those pools, and wading the *fresh* water that still flows down the mid channel, are too distant and dwindled to be very visible motions in the picturesque vast with mountains all about. Yet their dim-seen blue and red country-fashion dresses serve to enliven the novel prospect, the horizon-sun's long *flashes* fitfully presenting those colours of their garb, and casting their long shadows, which *do* stir *visibly*. All besides is marble-smooth gilded desert of quicksands —at least, shifting sands—for of that nature is a considerable portion of these Traeths.

But a nobler spectacle is *above;* the disrobing to the sun of all Snowdon's morning mountains. The *resurrection*, if I may venture the term—of the greater beauties of mountains,

from the night horror of their mere dusky outlines, has something in it of awful and even supernatural in look, that almost attracts the fancy toward the true tremendous re-appearance of all things after the *Grave's* own long night. There are to be seen, *high up* Snowdon, peculiar tints of umber red, mixed with grey blue, the former ferruginous probably but whispering to fancy of ancient volcanic ruins. But now the horrid sable which all night long had frowned round their grim brows, kept melting away into silvery, rosy, vermilion light! Mists (beautiful as the sweetest morning could make them, with its tender blue brilliance and tender pale gold of sunlight), curled, smiled, and waved, transparent, over those grim hues still peeping *through*. The chaotic lofty view of their confused groups—the rolling blackness of the mist (*itself* now become their most exquisite beauty!) was food for lofty phantasy. As I sat alone on the greensward, whither I had climbed, I could not help thinking of the emerging of the shrouded dead from darkness, from dust, from lead, from mould, from marble —to the light of the *Last* Morning! There was a soft silent sublimity in the scene and the hour, that led on the thought to *that* hour when all graves shall yawn, and all earth yield

up its dead and its darkness to a sun that shall never set, and the shocking shroud which hung its horror on the grimness of the corruptible body, in the long night of death, drop or change into the robes of the incorruptible! of the eternal angel, emerging from those terrific ruins of man! of the *angel*, or whatever else our finite conceptions can picture, as the beauty of a soul admitted to the presence of God! ('Am I mad, most noble Festus?' I believe it is but the intoxicating *oxygen* of this glorious morning.)

Assembled all at breakfast we began to talk over superstitions of mountaineers, which seem borrowed from such aerial spectacles.

"The superstitions of Wales," the Doctor remarked, "form no part of the popular *poetry* of our age; yet there exist many grandly imaginative. How few know any thing about our *Cwn Annwn*,* that is 'Dogs of the Sky,' but which their office, as assigned, would warrant us to call the *Bloodhounds of Souls!* by earthly analogy. Sudden fires trail along the heavens at the moment of a dying person's body and soul taking leave, and that light is no other than that

* *Annwn.*—The *bottomless abyss; Hell*, in the ancient sense, as the "bourn" of all spirits.

fire which each of that terrible pack always has following after like a chain; and sounds like the yellings of an earthly hunt, may be heard in the dumbness of midnight, and which hunting is no less than the chase of the parting soul by these fiends of the sky, as it flies towards Heaven's gate before them, the flight for nothing less than *eternal* life or death! What superstition affecting *mortal* life and its brevity, and its briefer pains, can compare in terror, in wildness, or sublimity with this? with these howlings and huntings for immortal souls, these wildfires trailed by demon bloodhounds, across all the deep-blue *Chase* of the midnight heavens, and the issue of the dread hunting never revealed to the mourner, upgazing from the gate of the house of mourning? The light borne in the hand of a spirit, moving the way a corpse shall soon be borne, and called the *Canwyll Corph*—Corpse Candle—is better known; and a solemn fancy is that!

"More terrible and forcible in mournful conception is the strange being that crosses the twilight path of the Welsh mountaineer, and which warns him by its mere presence, of a death in his house near at hand. The *Cyoewraeth* is the likeness of a woman, frightfully cadaverous of visage, bringing all the festering

horror of a three weeks' burial in its grim yet not utterly disfeatured loathsomeness, abroad into the world of life, divulging the foulest secrets of the grave! This *form* stands direct in some lonesome path of the startled person, tossing her long grisly arms in the air and wringing her earthy lengths of wasted hand, and—shaking down her already worm-beset hair over her eye-holes, and their sunken dead-lights fixed upon his, steady as the basilisk's on its prey, but gloomy—sets up such a cry of wild weeping, and utters two words only, so terrible in their power, that they for the moment arrest the moving blood in the veins of the hearer—the Welsh words signifying 'Oh, my wife!' or 'Oh, my husband!' according to the sex of the shortlived object of its fatal forewarning.

"There exists in Wales also," said the Doctor, "some vague superstitious idea of that tremendous kind which gives effect to the Œdipus, and to Greek Tragedy in general:—the belief in the occasional operation of an overruling destiny, impelling its victims to forbidden deeds, and hence preparing for the really innocent, but apparently guilty outcasts of human sympathy, penal dooms, and hideous pitfalls of perdition, unforeseen and inevitable! The recurrence of certain crimes and fates in certain

families, may be remarked in English as well as Welsh annals, but I don't know that any instance, equally striking with what in this country has fallen under my own notice, has been recorded, though such may, doubtless, have really occurred.

"What I allude to is, the existence of a family, in which, for several generations, the behests of law have been working tragedies and decimating its members. The broad features of the fatal fortunes of these persons, as I learned from a clergyman of their district, are these. They exhibit in early life the very best dispositions. Their first adult years in rustic servitude or under the paternal roof, fulfil that early promise. Their first *attachment* is followed by a first step in crime—they swerve from the happy and flowered path of their infantine innocence, their youthful industry—but it is *marriage* that seals their dismal doom. It matters not how prudent, how well omened that union may appear—the next and no distant step is—*in blood!*

"An old Brecknockshire magistrate in Builth, now deceased, told me, that he had himself, in the course of his life, known three capital convictions of persons belonging to this stock, had seen *two* of these (with an interval) hanging in

chains. One odd fact which he added was perhaps more strange than all. A woman—either widow or mother, he forgot which—sate knitting stockings in the sun, *at the foot of the gibbet*, which detained from its parent earth the ghastly carcase of so near a friend. It stood on a corner of a hilly heath, not far from her home.

"Charity might perhaps ascribe this seeming apathy to its contrary, excess of feeling, a morbid melancholy, with as much probability of truth, as to callousness in the woman, to which last my informant Mr. P. attributed it. If we should go further, and connect the act with the *seeming* dark Predestination which had consigned the victim (whose red right hand had been held by an Invisible Inscrutable Hand and Power, when it 'broke into the bloody house of life')—to that sad barred and wind beat grave in the air, demanding the passing traveller's curse instead of prayer; if we should, I say, see in that lone woman's selecting the many nailed *gibbet* tree, with its putrified burthen or skeleton, for her summer seat, instead of the *green* tree, with its pure fresh head of beauty and shade—only a passive resignation, equally mystic and involuntary with the congenital curse)—to the fate inflicted by it on her seared

heart—the image becomes, not only affecting but almost sublime! I am anticipating, however, the story I shall now read, at your desire."

THE DAUGHTER OF THE DOOMED FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

In a wild part of Brecknockshire there lives a family widely disseminated, whose misfortune it has been to have added so many to the Welsh Criminal Calendar, for great crimes, as to have brought on the family name a degree of odium, perhaps natural, but, nevertheless, unjust. To avoid adding to that injustice, I shall suppress the name; but whosoever may trouble themselves to inquire, in almost any part of the county, cannot fail of being informed of this, as well as many other particulars relating to this family, of a strange and melancholy character, some too fearful for belief. So strong is this impression that many honest

members of this stock (said to be of Irish extraction) have actually taken false names. It is a common artifice of malignity with some enemy, to affiliate the object of his wrath on the race of the S—— falsely; and where an innocent and esteemed member of it (and there live many such) is described by a friendly neighbour as belonging to it, it is in such an undertone, with such a solemnity of secresy, as if he were actually whispering some murder committed by that member, instead of the very innocent misfortune of having been born of that race. As an instance of renouncement of name (to the Welsh native in itself no light trial) I may mention what was told me by a clerical magistrate, whose church is situated in the district of the aboriginal settlement, that a farmer who bore the name, having occasion to enroll this unfortunate cognomen on some official list, earnestly desired to be allowed to substitute his christian for his surname. Perhaps it is unfortunate for these poor people that they are not wholly strangers to a sad superstition, the same on which the Greek tragedy so much depends for its solemn interest.

It may well be imagined, that on a susceptible melancholic turn of mind, the dark history of its ancestry might work with fearful

effect, and even possibly assist to add a fresh victim to that fatality, or that mysterious moral conformation, which has already rendered the name a misfortune, and overshadowed innocent, as well as guilty, of those bearing it, with somewhat of mystery and horror. A being impatient of the stigma cast on his whole race, thence readier to admit an unbrotherly grudge against his kind, ruminating on the credibility of such predooming to crime and penal pains, as the sad history of his forefathers would seem to whisper to the yet innocent descendant, might come at last to dream himself borne along by an irresistible hand in the dark, toward a sea of blood. Such a sad enthusiast would be likely to mistake the first violent impulse of passions, feebly resisted, for that inscrutable decree, and terrible hand.

The connection of the preceding narration with the following story, will shortly appear.

There is a little-frequented long valley in Carnarvonshire, following the course of the small river Lyfni, remarkable for the union o pastoral beauty and sublimity. The mountain Snowdon is seen from hence in a *defined* shape, extremely rare. The distinctness with which the vast peak, rising above a chaotic mass of inferior yet stupendous mountains, seems to

bar all egress, terminating the long vista, is peculiar to this point of view. The slopes on each hand rise rocky yet pastoral, with so grand a sweep, that the castellated top-cliffs curve round, and overhang the vast concave of the mountain's breast, somewhat like the surf of a mountain wave's top-ridge, when it hangs bellying over the green trough of the sea, a moment before its fall. The brawling sparkling river along the bottom, and the lonely and unvisited lake or rather lakes of Lynneau Nantle complete this Alpine landscape.

At the date of this narrative all its beauties lay dead in a shroud of drifted snow, and vaulted by a black-blue evening sky of January. A livid shining dark streak, with stiff flags and reeds singing in their sheaths of ice, alone told where (in the universal marbled white) lay the lovely pastoral water of that lake; and what seemed but a formal-shaped snow drift, with a wreath of blue smoke curling up from it, alone revealed the comfortable farm house called Pen y Coed, close by the water; except that several more drifts, cone-shaped or square, also hinted of peat-stack, cow-house, barns, and sundries, only to be guessed at by any traveller not quite at the house-end. A Mr. Septimus Morris, a young Oxford collegian of Jesus,

the son of the good couple in that farm, who was spending his Christmas at home, stopped on an eminence of the road leading towards Bedd-Gelart to admire the sudden glory of prospect which unexpectedly broke on him. He had deemed the shut-up sun long set, so inky was the sky, and the profound ravine so night-like in its chill, when suddenly a pyramidal tower of purest alabaster, with pale gilding, seemed to rise in heaven, and there stood shining, the back ground of sky retaining all its luridness to give it grander effect. It was Y Wyddva, the highest point of Snowdon, with all its glazed snow, glistening as if all spar, with the intensity of frost, while all below, a driving cloud of the fine dust of the surface snow, was borne like the sands of the great deserts in a whirlwind-volume round the very heads of the lower mountains, stretched across the vale's end, so that only that mighty head, glorified by the last sunshine caught from the sun's looking out half below the distant sea, was visible, cut off from the world of driving storm below, yet looking peace and summer, like a temple—the giant buttresses of which were partly unrobed to perfect the sublime picture, being the two sons of the monarch mountain, Cryb-y-Dystyll and Cryb-Coch.

As the young man stood admiring, in spite of the cutting wind, stock still, a tint of purple changed the snow chrystal to amethyst, a rosy faint flush like a hectic cheek succeeded, till it languished quite away, and the deep and dreadful gloom of an inclement night without a moon, began to thicken visibly that instant. But as Mr. Septimus turned towards home in haste, his eye caught a figure (through a blinding sleet) of some one descending that craggy road high above and far, who seemed to lift clasped hands as in despair, at sight of that last smile of daylight, while the slow and dragging gait seemed to prove that terror not unfounded. The road being screened by the steep rising declivity, had been left partly free of snow by the wind sweeping over it with its drifts, so that the figure, muffled in the snow fallen in some loftier part of its way, was very visible. A traveller in such a place and hour was very rare. Mr. Morris waited its approach in vain. He reverted his steps to seek the object, but it avoided him, or had returned the path it came.

That evening the old farmer and wife and son 'Septy' sate over a rather novel meal, a "dish of tea" made from a pound which a "captain" of Carnarvon, now come to keep a

"public" at Llanlyfni village, six miles distant, had made the "young scholar" a present of, "because he had been used to such outlandish drink mayhap at college:"—tea, be it known even to this day is a sort of rarity in many of the *very* retired parts of Wales. A soft tapping was heard at the door, loud enough however to rouse some shaggy dogs sleeping on the hearth, which flew all together to the wicket, before it could be opened by the son. Looking over the half door, though nobody appeared at first, he could see a female shrinking up to the peat-stack at the house end, in terror of the dogs. As she entered, the light (a pith of the large rush soaked in grease, of half a yard's length, fixed in a kind of vice carried in the hand) glimmered on a young, a very young female; her lips and cheeks bloodless, and her features deadly white, in spite of the keen frost-wind; extreme exhaustion evident in her whole frame. She asked a night's lodging in English, with a voice shrilly infantile with fatigue. Though hospitality be a virtue indigenous to Wales, it is not always found to thrive in the most rugged of its solitudes. Old Mr. Morris smoked on, in his huge wicker chair canopying his head, and only vouchsafed a quiet gaze at the poor girl iced up in snow. His wife answered her,

but it was only with the constant rebuff to 'foreigners'—"Dim Saesnaeg," at which the girl addressed her in Welsh. Though her face ceased to lower at her, when she spoke the language, she shewed no readiness to grant her request. The stranger fixed her hollow eyes piteously on the noble bank of fire that glowed on the hearth, piled like red hot-cannon balls, far up the *reredoss*, or antique iron back of the chimney place, still used in the Welsh farm of older fashion; a species of winter fire which even England, with her *Yule* log may envy, formed of the comminuted stone-coal (that burns without smoke) and clay, moulded into balls which glow intensely. The intercession of the son procured her the favour she begged. Indeed, Mrs. Morris herself did not mean to turn her forth when she saw her under her stiffened cloak, clasp and raise her hands, and her fine dark eyes at the same time, on looking at the half-open door, and the horrible bleak waste she must face again, and heard her murmur to herself, "Then I shall die in that snow this night!" Though almost a child, the fire-light shewed. as she faced it, and some refreshment began to dispel the deathiness of her look, a lofty fair forehead, large expressive eyes, extreme fairness joined to dark hair and eyes, altogether a style of countenance promising an im-

posing and grand kind of beauty for her womanhood.

She entreated any kind of work in door or without, as a permanent place ; but the old lady caught a view of her arms and hands, and they were very white :—indeed the traces of some illness, or extreme trial of her constitution, were visible in that sickly pale, and that deadly langour, which made her appear like one dying, or only keeping, as it were by an effort, from a deadly swoon.

Now, Mrs. Morris (or properly speaking Molly, the Welsh mode of designating every housewife, of farm or cot, below the rank of a Squire's lady, who is called Madam,) had a natural aversion to such a hue of hand, because, as she said, it looked "unnatural like," it was not "*Welshly*," especially for her dairy work, to squeeze butter, cheeses, &c. She preferred that hairy brown tan appearance, and chopped blunt-fingered hand, which bespoke hard work. She eyed her finely rounded arms, and their digits, with disgust, through her glasses, while her son viewed them with earnestness, if with different impressions. A shake of the head gave token of disapproval, and next morning the wanderer was prepared with the first light to renew her travel, on the

cause and aim of which she observed an evident anxious secresy. The pity of the son Septimus had procured her every comfort, however, for great indeed is the sway and influence which a "son at college" come home to Welshly parents after a few years' polishing, acquires, even where all filial deference remains. Hence the singular stranger, betwixt a woman of sorrow and a lost child, perplexing the guessings of her young host, found provided by his order, the same fine fire she had found over night, hot milk, and the "scholar's" own bread (which had been prepared for his visit) on the long oaken board on tressels, which formed the breakfast table. She appeared deeply sensible of his kindness, with such emotion at parting as a much younger sister might betray (only checked by her awe of the *gentleman*) at quitting a brother for life. The morning was wildly dismal with sleet and a snow-laden sky. The stranger lingered long, looking back often, on her way. Some hours after, she reappeared at the door, and entering presented a little purse to the dame, which she found full of gold, and almost screaming with surprise or alarm, knitted her grey brows at the bearer, and thrust it back into her hand, looking eagerly down at her foot, for the suspected

cloven betrayal of her visiter's nature; but seeing only a pretty enough foot, she whispered her old man "Mac hi un or Tylwyth Teg," meaning that it was one of the "fair family," a species of Fairies of human stature, sometimes mischievous, but mostly kind; yet formerly subjects of dread to the twilight traveller of the moss, or valley depth. Thus we learn from Sir John Wynne (History of the Gwydir Family) that about the middle of the sixteenth century, one of the "little tyrants" who distracted Wales with their mutual bloody animosities and eternal feuds, having become an outlaw, retired to Ireland, but returned soon secretly, and lived with many followers in the great woods (like the Duke of Shakespear) in his old neighbourhood, only coming abroad by night, "when," says the worthy old knight, "being all drest in green none durst approach them, but if any saw them they ran away, thinking them to be the Tylwyth Teg."

But the old farmer conceived harder suspicions of her, at which the girl bursting into tears, began with almost solemn energy to protest her honesty—that it was her own rightfully; but that, would they take it, and keep as security for her good conduct, she would serve them faithfully:—"and pray for you

nightly!" added the houseless creature, while her eye turned to the leaden snow sky, and imploringly to her former intercessor, the mild and not inelegant young visitor from college. The "scholar," the tears of the girl, and *the purse of gold*, prevailed with the old man. The dame would not allow her hand again to touch the mysterious gold, till she had taken down a sprig of dried herb hung at the doorway, St. John's wort, sovereign against witchcraft in Wales, and held in the other hand, while she counted the sum into her right.

Thus Nest Lewis (that was the name she assumed) became an inmate and a slave in the farm of Cwm Nanttle. Yet she struggled against nature itself (and evident illness) in executing her tasks, such as milking goats and ewes by a lighted rush in a snowy morning, on the cold lake side, and fetching in lambs dropped in a drift, and many harder—and even recovered fast her native healthy state.

Pity, *not* love, on the return of Septimus to Oxford, kept before his mind's eye his crabbed mother's poor, patient, white slave, eternally, till the next vacation, which seemed longer returning than ever before. He, on returning, hardly knew the outcast *child* again. A light of conscious tenderness, perhaps gratitude, met

him like a sudden soft star espied by us through dull clouds, where we least looked for it, not thinking it the time for it to rise. A soft roundedness of form, and the luxuriance attendant on that style of personal beauty, joined to fairness, too fair even for exposure and toil to much injure, brought to his rather poetical fancy some glorious lily, or other delicate yet gorgeous flower, that he had left well nigh bowed to the ground by storm, and pining for better soil, revived erect and glistening white brilliance, or waving "rosy red" in the eye of the sun.

The home sojourn of Septimus was very long, for, to the astonishment of all the neighbours, he resolved to give up a fellowship in prospect and become a farmer. To be brief, a passion, doubtless mutual as it was violent, grew between the stranger servant and her young master, kept secret till after the deaths of both the old people, which happened nearly together. Then Septimus, having received home a widowed sister who was much attached to him, avowed his honourable intentions. But when Nest's situation became thus anomalous, between servant and wife intended, and he grew eager to give her a sweeter, defined character, in his house, and his sister, too, seconded his entreaty, for the humble beauty had a pride or

dignity very striking, that "would not unsought be won," to the astonishment of both, her reluctance and her grief (for she grew sad and pale and anxious) grew in proportion to their earnestness. In truth, an unaccountable trouble, a constraint, and frequent concealed tears starting, and a sudden knit of brow, as if from some sudden pain shooting across the heart, which had been lulled to sleep by his endearments, had poisoned all their otherwise delicious intercourse. For in her state of ruthless servitude, it had been very delightful to him, by his influence with his parents, and his bribes to farm servants, to relieve her of almost all her severer tasks; doubly delightful to her to frequently learn by *whose* tender interposition she was so relieved, *who* it was that made the churlish mistress strangely kind, and the idle servant strangely willing to lend a helping hand.

To what singularity of fate or fortune could it be owing, that a loving and beloved young woman, of impassioned character, with no visible bar to happiness, resisted resolutely that happiness proffered by the object of her love, at once incurring and inflicting misery, without an end that could be conjectured? Yet, this was long the sad embarrassed state of the young pair. She would betray the ut-

most devotedness of fond attachment; her heart rested on his heart, her eye on his eye, secretly; his shortest absence was evident trouble and sadness to her; his return a rest and recomforting that restored her to herself. Her mind masculine, and spirit lofty, those qualities but showed themselves in a charming decorum, and propriety of thought and action. Her education Septimus had himself undertaken, and found Love a most apt learner. The rustic Eloisa loved learning for the sake of the teacher. The young man's means were ample, for the mode of life in these secluded farms is very inexpensive. Nothing seemed more capable of perfect bliss than their lot, and nothing could be more miserable. This was the extraordinary round of their intercourse. Her birth, its place, her family, she had long since stipulated to be allowed to bury in eternal silence as a condition of her stay, after the death of the old mistress. She could not bear to tell him the truth, or to impose on him a falsehood. She only offered by any oath to assure him that she was not guilty of any legal crime for which she had become an outcast. With all his confidence, this mystery of course was painful. Her passion, too powerful to be doubted by him, her trembling anxieties for his

health, would force him to regard her refusals as the coyness of virgin coquetry, playing with a heart she knew her own; he would then renew his eager suit, laugh at her rejection, grow sad, then furious at her repeating it with tears, and evident self-violence of resolve. His fury produced faintings, hysterics, despair on her part; when she revived, remorse on his. What could he do? He even promised to never renew the agitating question. That tender question, what all life's future hung on, to be never put again! It was impossible to keep such a promise; nay, she herself would not let him keep it, when she saw how miserable he was, while thus restraining himself. Then she would encourage her first love, her benefactor, her generous protector, by still freer, fonder indulgences, within the pale of modesty, to vent his full heart, and to once more propose what was so natural, so necessary even to her own good fame; for all saw she was no more a servant, and yet she was not, nor about to be a wife.

And he was encouraged, and again would talk of the day, the ring; and an inexplicable mixed fire and darkness would come to her too expressive eye at once; a smile like a sunflash, a hot cheek, and a death-paleness, and a faintness of some deep dark emotion, all followed

rapidly. Then she at last *did* consent, named a distant day; he was all transport, ran to tell his "sister Winny" the glad news. But ere it came, the struggle within her had made her ill; she confessed she had but promised because she "could not, *could not* bear to refuse; could not bear his anger under that refusal; but, indeed, indeed, she could not; oh, never could be his! Perhaps she might die soon, and her secret with her; if it were possible, and the parson would permit, she would have her heart taken out and kept in her Septy's chamber, at least till he should marry;" thus she told his sister. "For her body, they might put it anywhere; in Lyn Nantle pool if they would; she regarded it not, and there was nobody to regard it but him; he had her heart, her *heart*, her *soul*, if it was not sin to say it, till it went back to God, or—" Her vehement grief drew tears from the good sister, but her secret never transpired in her most extreme agitations.

This reiterated refusal, of course, convinced Septimus that coquetry had no share in producing it. On the contrary, it grew manifest that the unhappy girl was herself sinking fast into a profound melancholy, under the misery of her own compelled rejection of his hand. Whatever might be the nature of that compulsion,

the tantalizing torment of this state of baffled passion and perpetual anxious thinking, in exploring the dark secret of her bosom, at last affected the health of the sensitive young man very visibly. "He will not be very long after his parents, I'm thinking," was the remark of a neighbour overheard by Nest. She knew the cause of his declining state, and started at herself as if awaking from a horrid dream, in which she had been near murdering the object of her most intense gratitude and doating. She flew to him, forgetting in that new terrible compunction, whatever other feelings had so long kept her from his arms, and without even his renewed entreaty, all at once *named the day!* for fancy exaggerated his paleness, his sunkenness of eye, and sickly dejection of appearance, as she darted her eager eyes exploring into his eyes, and scrutinized his features with all the anxiety of the fondest mother examining the face of her sick child, from which she has been parted awhile, intensely curious to ascertain what change it may exhibit; and an early day seemed the actual condition of her Septy's life.

Once more exhilarated to extasy, the long-sullen lover wept for joy. *This* was her own free proposal; *now* he no longer doubted of

happiness, the romantic happiness of calling the "white stranger," as the neighbours had baptized her from her first singular pallid look, the wife of his bosom.

A very short and trite conversation that passed one fine twilight, as they walked by the little lake, took powerful effect on the mysterious mind of the young bride elect.

"I wonder, will your sister Winny ever marry again?" she observed.

"No, I hope not," he replied.

"*Hope not!* why?"

"Because she's a delicate-minded woman, and no coarse-minded man would make her happy, and none but such marry *widows*."

"Good God! are you in earnest?" said his mistress, turning pale as death.

"Certainly; can *pure love* exist toward an impure object? Now, every widow is in some sense impure; her *bloom* of heart is gone; her bud of beauty has blown forth in the eye of another—is she not another's leavings? I wonder, my sweet girl, how you could ask me if I was in earnest! Is there nothing in that *gloss* of *first* feelings, what shall we call it? that *virgin* bloom of the whole lovely human fruit? *this* that *you* have kept so long for *me*—for *me*, my precious!" said the fastidious Sep-

timus, proudly eyeing the averted smooth-cheeked beauty, now all crimson, which he kissed. "Is there nothing in all this, think you? Is it as well dulled and palled over or away? Come, come, confess *you* wouldn't bear to offer your Septy even this sweet face and fine form, had you no longer its freshest graces to offer too! *Would* you now? No, no, let poor Winny live for her little ones, not for a second husband!"

"And what have *I* to live for?" murmured Nest, as if unconsciously almost aloud.

"*First* love or none," continued the poetical lover, "for me! And as to *person*, it's monstrous to be indifferent on that head when marriage is the question—children, too—eternal remembrancers—oh, it's gross! You might as well think of a return of yonder rain-drops, now twinkling on these oak-boughs that shelter us, after they've run away in that brook which turns the mill yonder, to their high place shining on the golden green leaves in this sunny shower, as talk about the raptures of young love after the devotion of love to wedlock! That water's a useful water, and an admirable, nay, far more so than when darting its little rainbow-prisms in your eyes and mine, as it's doing now; but I don't look at it usefully roll-

ing there discoloured, as I do at those trembling liquid diamonds. Good God! are you ill, faint?"

Nest was in a suppressed agony of tears, and this burst of his romantic delicacy of nature, with its little flash of poetry, was, trifling as it seemed, the ground of renewed misery to him. After excusing as she could this sudden emotion, she next morning astonished his sister with another refusal of his hand, though the ring was bought, and all in readiness for their nuptials.

But the sisterly feeling of her friend now vented itself on the wretched girl in such unmeasured terms of reproach; she painted the ingratitude of her conduct in such colours, calling her the wanton murderess of her brother's peace, prospects, and life; that Nest, smiling pleased assent through all her tears and agony, to every word her reviler uttered of the merits of her lover, and the obligations she owed him, at last threw herself on her neck. The easily-softened sister returned her embrace, and altered her tone to tender reproach and solicitations for her brother. Then it was that Nest seemed to resolve an end to that agony of deliberative doubt which had marked her looks and actions. She was of tall stature, and when she erected herself, and held her friend's hands

both in her own trembling ones, looking intensely in her face, Winny felt an awe of expectation of what was to follow, and her first words were of a nature to further arouse that feeling. "*Can* you be secret?" she said with a wild solemnity, "will you be secret as guilt, as death and the grave?—will you *swear* to be? For sooner I could meet the cruelest death possible, death in any form, most miserable death! oh, far sooner than I could your brother's open face ever, ever again, if you should ever tell him what I am now going, what I *must* now tell you!" The sister pledged herself to secresy; she continued, "Would to God I had been a corpse, a skeleton in the earth, buried as soon as I had breathed, a fifteen years' lodger in the waste ground of the church back, instead of in this wicked world, when I first came wandering to Pen y Coed, to stand as I have done between my dear, dear Septimus—why do I call him *mine?*—and virtuous virgins that he might have loved but for me; to cut him off from honest, happy wedlock! *I*, who have only a poor, worthless, bleeding, broken heart to give him! not innocence, not what he deserves and desires! But, thank God! I have not deceived him, nor will not! No,

Winny *vach!* * I cannot, I cannot be his; I cannot bear to either deceive or undeceive the dear, generous lad!" And then she covered her face with both her hands, adding in hollow voice—"I am a mother!"

The substance of this confession so torturingly wrung from her was, that she had been at the age of fourteen seduced by a son of a neighbouring man of fortune—that according to her own suspicion her own parents were actually conniving at her ruin, induced by large gifts to allow solitary meetings between her and him—that on the occasion of that event which betrayed her disgrace, she revolved in her mind not only the present distress but an old obloquy for the crime of murder, under which she said her family name had suffered time immemorial —that, wrought up to a fearful pitch of wild desperate feeling, she rose from bed at midnight, while her infant was yet but a few days old, resolved to renounce name, birthplace, and family for ever, and *re-commence* existence as it were, in the most distant place her weakness might reach, or find a grave in the attempt.

* A diminutive epithet of endearment, in constant use among the rustic Welsh, applied to females, as *bach* is to the male persons, Both mean literally "little." Both are sounded without the *c*, exactly as the Scotch sound "Loch," a lake.

Her clothes cast on a swoln tide river's bank for the purpose of preventing pursuit, she left near the house, and a purse she had stooped to beg of her seducer for the adventure she meditated, supplied her wants as well as gave surety to her churlish employer at last, for her good conduct. The age of the seducer (double her own) gave him all the advantage of art to work on the simplicity and vanity of the rustic child thus betrayed to him. Connecting in her thoughts the suspected crime of her parents, with that imputed proneness to guilt of her family—she resolved to never more bear its name, or acknowledge its affinity, and acted on this resolve till this fatal passion compelled the revealment of herself. As no inquiries after her had been made, to any one's knowledge, it seemed probable that she was given up for drowned by her relatives in the county of ————, where she was born. Such a resolution, conceived and executed by a mere child of hardly fifteen years, evinced a spirit capable of great actions in future—good or ill.

END OF VOL. I.

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